United Nations S/PV.4261

Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4261st meeting

Tuesday, 23 January 2001, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Mahbubani	(Singapore)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Chowdhury
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Colombia	Mr. Franco
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Mali	Mr. Konfourou
	Mauritius	Mr. Gayan
	Norway	Mr. Strommen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Sergeev
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Mustapha
	Ukraine	Mr. Krokhmal
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Harrison
	United States of America	Mr. Minton

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (S/2001/35).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

01-22307 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Welcome to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Mauritius

The President: At the outset of the meeting, I should like to acknowledge the presence at the Council table of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Mauritius, The Honourable Anil Kumarsingh Gayan. On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to him.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (S/2001/35)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Central African Republic, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome the Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of Relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic, Mr. Agba Otikpo Mezode.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mezode (Central African Republic) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Sy to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend invitations under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Frederick Lyons, Acting Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and to Mr. Mats Karlsson, Vice-President for External Affairs and United Nations Affairs of the World Bank.

Before I announce a decision on this, let me mention that I had informed the members of the Council at the consultations of the whole yesterday that UNDP would be represented by Mr. Diabre. When I returned to my office yesterday evening I got a new message saying that, instead, Mr. Frederick Lyons would represent UNDP. I thought I should explain this to members of the Council.

There being no objection to the participation of these two individuals, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Lyons and Mr. Karlsson to take the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

I would like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 22 January 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request you to extend an invitation to Mr. Ridha Bouabid, Permanent Observer for the International Organization of la Francophonie to the United Nations, in connection with the Security Council debate on the situation in the Central African Republic, scheduled for 23 January 2001, in accordance with rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council."

That letter will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2001/67.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under

rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Bouabid.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Bouabid to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic, document S/2001/35.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic. I give him the floor.

Mr. Sy (*spoke in French*): I have the honour today to introduce to the Security Council the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic, contained in document S/2001/35. This is the second report of the Secretary-General since the establishment of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), on 15 February 2000, and covers the period from July 2000 to January 2001. The report describes the overall situation in the Central African Republic and gives an account of what the Office has been doing to support the authorities and all segments of Central African society in their efforts for national reconciliation and peace-building.

As members of the Council will see from the report before them, the political situation in the Central African Republic is characterized by considerable tension in relations between the ruling party and the opposition. There is little communication or dialogue between the political players. President Patassé has not yet organized the meeting with the country's political players that he promised in June 2000. The opposition, which seems to favour confrontation, is today calling for the President's resignation.

The tense relations between the ruling party and the opposition worsened in December 2000 with the arrest and trials of over 60 persons — including four opposition parliamentarians — in connection with their participation in an unauthorized meeting. Although all those arrested were released after the trial held on 29 December 2000 and 3 January 2001, the tension is far from dissipated. Opposition deputies have been boycotting the work of the National Assembly since then. The developments in the political situation and, in particular, the lack of consultation or dialogue among political players, are obstacles to strengthening the young democratic institutions of the Central African Republic.

The second report on the situation in the Central African Republic stresses the serious nature of social problems in that country today. The social situation is still very tense and has worsened since October as a result of the prolonged civil service strike precipitated by the accumulation of unpaid salary arrears and current salaries. Civil servants are calling for the payment of 12 months' worth of arrears out of the 30 months' worth of salaries due them. The opposition is siding with the unions and is attempting to exploit the social situation politically.

I must draw the attention of members of the Council to the fact that the operation referred to as "Central Africa: a dead country", which had been called for by trade unions, has been a complete failure, as the orders of the unions headquarters were not heeded. This development could lead to the opposition showing a degree of flexibility that might make possible the establishment of a genuine dialogue with a view to a definitive settlement of the social crisis.

The economic situation is very precarious. The Central African economy has not yet recovered from the destruction that took place in connection with the mutinies. The overall crisis in the country has worsened as a result of the problems in fuel supplies that began in June 2000. The situation has also worsened as a result of the war in neighbouring Congo, the consequent disruptions in shipping on the Ubangui River and the resulting disruption in the supply of basic goods to the country.

There has been a drop in tax and customs revenues, which has made it impossible for the authorities to improve public finances or to deal with the country's financial obligations. However, one can hope that the recent financial support measures taken by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will enable the Government to deal

gradually with the problems facing it, including the problem of salaries.

With regard to the human rights situation, we have been happy to see a decrease in the number of summary and extrajudicial executions. However, another form of human rights violations has emerged in the Central African Republic: the popular justice referred to as "neighbourhood justice", which is common in Bangui and in which victims — thieves and "witches" — are often beaten to death.

The situation in the jails is also a cause for concern. Conditions for prisoners in police stations and gendarmerie brigades are not in keeping with international standards. The United Nations Office has organized many training courses in cooperation with the Government to strengthen capacity in this area. About 300 law enforcement officers have been given training in human rights and international humanitarian law. There is an urgent need to strengthen the country's judicial and prison systems, but that can be done only with substantial assistance from donors.

With regard to security and military questions, the report indicates that the overall situation in Bangui and the interior of the country is calm. However, there have been acts of urban banditry and major roads have been blocked for the purpose of highway robbery in the provinces. The programme to restructure defence and security forces continues, and several positive steps have been taken. However, there have been no tangible results in the demobilization and reintegration programme due to a lack of adequate resources. The programme was restructured, but it has been suspended for technical reasons. It will resume as soon as the necessary resources are available.

The report before the Council stresses the impact of the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Central African Republic. That war has led in particular to an influx of refugees into the southern part of the country, thereby contributing to the worsening of the economic situation. Needless to say, the recent death of President Kabila only serves to add to the uncertainty looming over the subregion, which in turn makes peace in such a vulnerable country as the Central African Republic even more fragile.

I would now like to draw the attention of members of the Council to the observations contained at the end of the report.

The situation in the Central African Republic today is of great concern. Political and social tension and the negative impact of the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo mean that the Central African Republic is the soft underbelly of the subregion, a fact that seriously jeopardizes any chance of strengthening peace and stability. The Secretary-General urges political actors in the Central African Republic, including the Government, to muster the necessary political will to overcome the current crisis.

Because of the economic and financial difficulties facing it, the Government of the Central African Republic has enormous expectations of the international community in general and of the United Nations in particular. Unfortunately, pledges made at the special donors' meeting in New York in May 2000 were not followed up on immediately. It would be very desirable for the partners of the Central African Republic to honour all their commitments. In this regard, I should like, on behalf of the Secretary-General, to thank all those Member States that have lived up to the promises that they made at the May 2000 meeting.

Finally, the Secretary-General draws the attention of the Council to the fact that the investment made by the international community to restore peace in the Central African Republic is in danger of being completely wasted if emergency assistance is not provided to the Central African authorities. In this regard, I should like to stress the range and gravity of the challenges facing the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic. Such challenges are both political and institutional, and require sustained attention on the part of the international community.

The President: I thank Mr. Sy for his comprehensive briefing.

The next speaker is the Acting Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme, Mr. Frederick Lyons, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Lyons: The Representative of the Secretary-General has outlined the severe social, economic and financial difficulties brought about by prolonged political tension, the army mutinies in 1996 and 1997

and repeated crises of governance in the Central African Republic. The fundamental problems of human insecurity that have resulted from this have led the Central African Republic's Government, with the support of the United Nations missions in Bangui, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other partners of the Central African Republic, to engage in a disarmament programme.

Building on the Bangui Agreement of 1996 and the recommendations of the 1998 National Reconciliation Conference, and within the framework of its National Plan to Fight Poverty, the Government and UNDP agreed in April 1998 on a demobilization and reintegration programme, with initial UNDP financing of approximately $2 million.

The new $7 million National Programme for Demobilization and Reintegration (PNDR), which was adopted at last year's Special Meeting on Security and Development, is a continuation and consolidation of this earlier programme, to which UNDP is now allocating additional resources. Working together with other development partners that pledged resources last May, namely, the European Union and the Governments of France, Italy, Norway and Germany, and with Canada, which made a pledge recently, the United Nations system hopes to have a positive and direct impact on the livelihood and security of the population of the Central African Republic.

I am pleased to report that the PNDR has now established the technical conditions for the implementation of the demobilization and reintegration programme. These include the installation of a central operational office; the conduct of a series of preliminary studies; the drawing up of an administrative and financial record of all military personnel and gendarmes; the establishment of a computerized data bank; the formulation of legal instruments for demobilization; the implementation of the first phase of an information campaign; the completion of a study on the socio-economic profile of military personnel and gendarmes; and the organization of a workshop on strategies for the financing of micro-projects.

In an initial phase, approximately 700 military and gendarmes will be demobilized. There will be approximately 5,000 beneficiaries, when families and dependants are included. To ensure the effective start-up of the programme, the Government of the Central African Republic will need to meet the prior obligation of settling outstanding civil service wages, including those of the 700 military and others who are to be demobilized under the programme. Timely contributions of the donor community to the PNDR will also be critical.

More generally, the PNDR needs to be seen as one of a number of programme initiatives aimed at enhancing human security and governance in the Central African Republic. In this connection, for the period 2000-2003, UNDP has allocated $9 million to intensify its programme support in several areas. The first area is good governance for sustainable human development, encompassing both the political and economic aspects of governance. I am pleased to inform the Council that the International Organization of la Francophonie has expressed an interest in collaborating with this programme, and that a formulation mission is travelling to the Central African Republic this month to prepare the programme, following which UNDP and la Francophonie will be seeking additional funding for this purpose.

Closely linked with the governance programme is the Central African Republic's poverty and sustainable livelihoods programme, an ongoing programme implemented in close collaboration with all the United Nations agencies in the Central African Republic. Adopting a participatory approach, it emphasizes the contributions of non-governmental organizations and grass-roots communities and focuses on income-generating activities and ensuring access to basic social services and productive assets.

Continued close collaboration will be maintained with the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the development of these activities, and we look forward to sharing with the Council information on the future progress of our programme activities in the Central African Republic.

The President: The next speaker is the Vice-President for External Affairs and United Nations Affairs of the World Bank, Mr. Mats Karlsson, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Karlsson: I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this welcome opportunity

to address the Council. We appreciate the lucidity and balance of the report of the Secretary-General and the briefing by his Representative.

The World Bank is very concerned about the situation in the Central African Republic, not just because of the particular difficulties it has faced in the past five years but also because it has been so affected by events elsewhere in Central Africa, including, most obviously, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In the past 10 years, Governments across Africa have moved steadily — some of them boldly — to introduce reforms which will strengthen growth and ensure basic services for the poor. Unfortunately, the Central African Republic has not kept pace with that progress.

Internal conflict has been one of the reasons. So has conflict outside its borders.

In its operational policy on development cooperation and conflict, issued this month, the Bank has committed itself to supporting economic and social recovery and sustainable development in countries in transition from conflict through investment and development policy advice, with particular attention to the needs of war-affected groups that are especially vulnerable for reasons of gender, age or disability.

In trying to meet this mandate, the Bank has a number of advantages in the Central African Republic, including a Country Office in Bangui and a long history of involvement in national development programmes. However, there have been interruptions in the Bank's programme in recent years, and a need to update our knowledge of policy areas that are important for economic growth and poverty reduction, including livestock, cotton, forestry and rural transport.

But the path to strengthening the Bank's programme there appears to be opening up. We have confidence in the Prime Minister and his economic team, not because they are always in agreement with us, but rather because they have a clear sense of their country's interests and are effective in defending those interests internally and externally.

Despite day-to-day difficulties that would daunt any of us, the Prime Minister and his colleagues have been able to keep their focus on medium- and long-term issues, which would only become more acute if left alone. For example, during consultations in Washington last month, the Prime Minister was as concerned about facing the HIV/AIDS crisis head-on and improving energy efficiency as he was about solving the problem of salary arrears in public service.

Recognizing this focus and commitment, and the special complications that external events — especially the interruption of petroleum supplies — have caused to economic management, the Bretton Woods institutions have supported the Government's stabilization and reform efforts in a number of ways. Last month, on 27 December, the Bank's Board partially waived a condition for the release of the second tranche of budget support. This action was very exceptional. The country was in arrears in its servicing of its International Development Association debt, and we would not normally ask our Board to approve a tranche release, much less a waiver, in such circumstances.

On 10 January, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved the second annual arrangement under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility.

On 18 January — last Thursday — the Bank's Board joined the IMF Board in endorsing the Government's Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper as a sound basis for preparing a more complete poverty strategy.

In the next six months the Bank will work closely with the authorities to develop a more comprehensive poverty strategy; help the Government to prepare the case for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative; support the preparation of an urgent project to fight HIV/AIDS, for which a Bank preparation mission is currently in the field; consider supplementary support for the energy sector; and apply a grant from the Bank's Post-Conflict Fund to fund activities at the community level.

Looking beyond the next six months, three points deserve particular attention. First, a sound economy built on strong and well-managed public finances and the rule of law are essential for underpinning peace-building efforts. Secondly, the alignment of the efforts of the entire United Nations community, with ourselves and our IMF colleagues focusing on the economic and social dimensions, has never been more vital than now, and we remain fully engaged. Thirdly, the international institutions can provide some temporary relief for pressing problems such as civil service salary arrears, but only determined and unswerving efforts on the part of the Government can address the root causes of the

crisis, especially weak governance, and provide a lasting solution.

Mr. Gayan (Mauritius): I wish to express my appreciation for your kind words of welcome addressed to me at the beginning of this meeting, Mr. President. I note also that you are conducting the Council's deliberations in a masterly manner.

My delegation would wish to thank the Secretary-General for the report dated 11 January on the situation in the Central African Republic. My delegation also wishes to convey its appreciation to Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mats Karlsson, Vice-President for External Affairs and United Nations Affairs of the World Bank, and Mr. Frederick Lyons, Acting Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme, for their comprehensive briefings this morning. My delegation also wishes to welcome The Honourable Agba Otikpo Mezode, Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of Relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic, to the Council.

The situation in the Central African Republic remains a matter of serious concern for the Security Council and the region in particular. The political tension between the ruling party and the opposition is unabated. The national reconciliation process seems never to get under way. The absence of dialogue between the Government and the opposition has exacerbated the socio-economic crisis faced by the Central African Republic.

The conflictual relations between the ruling party and the opposition and the boycott of the meetings of Parliament by the opposition constitute a serious setback to the democratic process, which is itself relatively new. Immense efforts have to be undertaken by the political leaders and major stakeholders to consolidate the democratic institutions that have been established. It is therefore imperative that the political leadership start, without delay, a process of dialogue with a view to bringing peace and stability to the country. But it is equally important that the opposition respond favourably to any such initiative.

The democratic process, which must be an inclusive process, depends upon the existence of institutions that alone are capable of ensuring that the fundamentals of a modern State are observed.

The political instability in the Central African Republic has been a major cause of the economic hardship suffered by the people for the past four years. The non-payment of salaries to the military and civil servants has resulted in social unrest and impoverishment of the population. As long as State employees are not paid their salaries, there can be no reliable public administration. Institutions essential for the smooth running of Government will be undermined. The rule of law will disappear and the resulting environment will lead to corruption and other illegal practices. Such an environment will destroy good governance and will give rise to abuses and injustices, as well as social and political crises.

This situation cannot therefore be allowed to prevail. Despite the great economic potential afforded by highly unexploited natural resources, the Central African Republic continues to face a fragile social, political and economic situation. Although there have been several attempts by the international community to help the Central African Republic out of its crisis, the outcome is, to say the least, disappointing.

The Bretton Woods institutions are of the view that the challenges of maintaining macroeconomic stability remain phenomenal in the Central African Republic. I think this requires no further comment.

My delegation considers that it is important that the request of the Government of the Central African Republic for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative be approved as early as possible, in order to enable it to address its economic challenges.

It is also important that the situation in the Central African Republic be viewed in the broader context of what is taking place elsewhere in the African continent. It is a matter of grave concern that at the start of the twenty-first century, several countries in Africa are still plagued by conflicts as a result of — and here we, as Africans, have to be honest with ourselves — the absence of good governance, non-respect for democratic institutions, persistent violation of human rights and the lack of transparency on all fronts.

I had the honour of participating in the France-Afrique summit, which was held last week in Yaoundé, in the Republic of Cameroon. The theme of the summit was globalization challenges and opportunities for Africa. While the summit was preparing to address

these fundamental issues, which are highly critical for the future of the African continent, the news of the assassination of the late President Laurent Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo filtered in. Such acts unfortunately underscore the magnitude of the problems which we face in Africa, and particularly in the Great Lakes region.

But not all news out of Africa is bad. We need to welcome the peaceful and democratic transition of power in Senegal, Benin and Ghana. The mindset is changing, and the leaders in Africa are working towards the restoration of peace, stability and security by engaging all parties in conflict situations with a view to promoting regional economic integration.

Instability and insecurity are the greatest impediments to development and progress in Africa. At this time, when the challenges facing Africa are so daunting and when the negative impact of globalization has yet to be assessed, it is opportune for Africa to look at the larger picture and concentrate on a path of development which avoids conflicts, tension and war and which enhances people-centred development strategies.

We welcome the efforts of the Security Council in the Central African Republic, and we wish also to inform the Council that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) leaders are working hard to defuse potentially explosive situations throughout the continent.

In the aftermath of the recent tragic events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the current Chairman of the OAU, President Eyadema of Togo, has taken the initiative of convening an urgent meeting of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. This initiative is welcome, and, together with whatever the Council undertakes, the OAU proposes to accompany the Council's efforts and attempt to seek African solutions to African problems.

We have to acknowledge that the conflicts in Africa have become a source of instability not only within the countries but also for other countries in the region. These conflicts have had damaging consequences, and they have already adversely affected the future of generations of Africans that are yet unborn.

Indeed, the predicament of the Central African Republic cannot be dissociated from the dire conditions prevailing in the Great Lakes region. The illegal circulation of, and trafficking in, small arms and light weapons; the use of mineral and other resources for financing paramilitary and organized rebel groups; and above all, the wrong utilization of human resources are some of the issues that need to be tackled urgently. We at the level of the OAU are engaged in getting African countries on a course dictated by harsh realities and pragmatism rather than ideology.

In conclusion, my delegation would wish an early return of political normalcy in the Central African Republic as well as a rapid economic recovery. My delegation also wishes to underscore the importance of viable regional cooperation to avert future conflicts.

The President: I thank the representative of Mauritius for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, for his statement, which clearly sets out the current situation in the Central African Republic. I should like also to thank for their statements Mr. Frederick Lyons, Acting Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Mr. Mats Karlsson, Vice-President for External Affairs and United Nations Affairs of the World Bank. If I may, I should like also to pay tribute in particular to Mr. Anil Kumarsingh Gayan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mauritius, for his presence and for his particularly wise statement.

Undeniable progress has been achieved in the past four years and continues to be achieved, thanks to the presence of the United Nations in the Central African Republic. Recent achievements include disarmament and the restructuring of security forces.

The Central African Republic, situated as it is in one of the most unstable and fragile regions of Africa, is undoubtedly one of the success stories of the United Nations in the past few years. Nevertheless, the situation in the Central African Republic remains unstable and fragile. The breakdown in the political dialogue, the recurrent strikes and the economic difficulties that have been mentioned are all causes of concern.

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo can explain these difficulties to some extent, but it does not explain the entire situation. France, along with the other members of the Council, would like to know, as soon as possible, the results of the mission carried out by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Amara Essy, who last December went to assess the consequences of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the situation in the Central African Republic.

These tensions threaten the process of civil peace and national reconciliation that was initiated four years ago and which led to the signing, in January 1997, of the Bangui Agreements. It is, unfortunately, the Central African people who would be the primary victims of any return to the dark years of 1996 and 1997. But the international community itself would stand to lose a great deal were the process of reconciliation in the Central African Republic to be blocked.

Four years of intense efforts are at stake: those of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Banguie Agreements, until April 1998; those of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic; and, finally, those of the United Nations Peace-Building Support Office in the Central African Republic, since February 2000. These efforts enabled the Central African Republic to appear — and I paraphrase the words of the Secretary-General in a previous report — as an island of relative stability in a war-torn region.

To emerge from this difficult situation in the Central African Republic, two complementary types of efforts are required. The first area continuing international assistance, which is indispensable. We can thus only be gratified at the decision of the World Bank to disburse to second tranche of $5 million of the fiscal consolidation credit. The International Monetary Fund's recent decision on the reduction of indebtedness is also a step in the right direction.

I am gratified at this opportunity to share our views with eminent representatives of the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. I believe this is a good example, which we should follow on other occasions. The Security Council must increasingly serve as the forum to craft integrated strategies for peace-building.

There should be no pause either in bilateral assistance. The commitments undertaken here in New York in May 2000 must be honoured in full. France, for its part, has fully honoured the pledges it made in 2000 and will continue to honour all of its commitments. France is the principal bilateral donor, accounting for more than 18 per cent of total official development assistance. In terms of civilian operations, this represents $18 million in 2000. More than 82 volunteers are present in the field.

Among its main projects in military cooperation, France has helped to equip two companies of the Central African army, one in Bouar, the other in Bria. Work has begun to deploy a third motorized police unit in Bambari. The principal objective of these decentralization efforts is to achieve security and the revival of economic activity in the provinces of the Central African Republic.

International assistance, however, is not all that is required. The second focus of efforts must be civil peace. Peace-building has now replaced peacekeeping. Central Africans are once again fully in charge of their own fate. France entirely agrees with the assessment made by the Secretary-General in his report that

> "It is up to the Central Africans themselves to summon the political will and work towards national reconciliation". (*S/2001/35, para. 36*)

Among all the political actors who must participate in that national reconciliation, the Central African authorities have a particular responsibility. It is incumbent on them above all to make decisions conducive to allaying existing tensions. Two measures are of the highest priority. First, the dialogue with the opposition must be revived and, secondly, all arrears of wages must be paid as soon as the budget permits. From this perspective, the Government's announcement that, as of February, it intends to repay all arrears from the year 2000 is good news. Similarly, the release in early January of 62 detainees held since the banned rally of 19 December was another positive signal. We hope that, in light of recent tensions, structural reform will resume, beginning with reform of public finances in order to stabilize the financing of the civil administration.

It is in this spirit of peace-building that the Security Council's dialogue with the Central African authorities must continue. The presence here today of a high-level representative of the Central African authorities, Minister Agba Otikpo Mezode, is

particularly welcome and I welcome him very warmly here today.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): We thank the Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), Cheikh Tidiane Sy; World Bank Vice-President Mats Karlsson; and the Acting Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme, Frederick Lyons, for their briefings. Bangladesh warmly welcomes the presence among us of The Honourable Anil Kumarsingh Gayan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Mauritius, and we thank him for his very important statement. We should like to offer particular words of appreciation to Mr. Sy and his team on the ground for their tireless efforts towards securing peace and supporting institution-building in the Central African Republic.

The last time the Council considered the situation in the Republic was in July. At that time, my delegation committed its total support for the important role BONUCA had been playing.

Later in the meeting, we shall have the pleasure to listen to the Central African Republic Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility. We look forward to hearing his perspective on the situation in his country.

Since the institution of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic, we have seen some progress in achieving peace and stability in the country. However, we still find a number of concerns prevailing on the ground.

First, as to the absence of national reconciliation, it is important that the Government and the opposition get into dialogue to consolidate peace and national reconciliation. We would encourage the Government to initiate dialogue. In that respect, we would urge the Representative of the Secretary-General to use his good offices to focus on this aspect.

Secondly, as to human rights, while we are happy to see a diminishing of summary executions, we are equally concerned at the "neighbourhood justice" that is alarmingly taking over in the Central African Republic. The Secretary-General in his report has portrayed a worrisome human rights situation in various dimensions. This is another area where we would once again ask for the urgent attention of the Secretary-General's Representative, in consultation with the Government of the Central African Republic.

Thirdly, we are particularly concerned at the long-unpaid arrears of civil servants and the resulting discontent. In the country's current economic situation, this is likely to have a spiralling effect on the social situation. The Secretary-General has underlined that the resentment might intensify. In that regard, we appreciate the Government's recent announcement to pay part of the arrears of the civil servants. We strongly encourage the Government to continue its efforts in that direction.

Fourthly and finally, let us turn to the role of the international community. Following last May's meeting, we expected bilateral and multilateral donors and the multilateral financial institutions to support the Central African Government in a much more robust manner. Although the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have recently released some financial resources, the bulk of the commitments remains unfulfilled. This morning, we heard the Secretary-General's Representative underline how reconstruction and reconciliation efforts could be at risk because of resource constraints. We remain concerned, learning from the Secretary-General's report that much of the recent release of the World Bank's credit will be consumed by further debt-servicing. We believe that the Central African Republic should be considered for debt relief as soon as possible.

Bangladesh would support the Secretary-General's call to the donors in that vein to assist the Central African Government to meet the multifarious challenges on a stronger footing. This will have an important impact on the country's overall economic stability. Bangladesh fully agrees with World Bank Vice-President Karlsson in his emphasis on the need to align the efforts of the entire United Nations community, focusing on social and economic areas.

Following this meeting, the Council will adopt a presidential statement. My delegation fully supports the elements in that statement.

Mr. Harrison (United Kingdom): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on the Central African Republic. We should also like to thank Mr. Sy, the Secretary-General's Representative, for his introduction to this debate. We should also like to thank the representatives of the

United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank for their interventions. My delegation is also pleased that Minister Mezode of the Central African Republic is present here today.

It was good that our debate was begun by the Foreign Minister of Mauritius. He set out a thoughtful and perceptive African perspective on the Central African Republic's problems. My delegation agrees with this perspective. Minister Gayan noted, for example, that the problems of the Central African Republic include an absence of good governance, a lack of respect for democratic institutions, violations of human rights and the absence of transparency.

My delegation is very concerned by the dismal situation in the Central African Republic, which is getting worse. It is very important, as others have said, that the efforts of the international community and of the United Nations over recent years not be wasted.

In that context, we believe that the only way to resolve the present national crisis is for there to be full consultation and cooperation between the Government of President Patassé and the opposition. We are concerned about the allegations that militias are being used to intimidate the opposition. It is essential that all sides use only democratic means to resolve their disputes.

We understand that the Government has now found money to pay at least some of the backlog of public-service salaries, and we welcome this, but it is just a temporary solution. It is essential that the Government of the Central African Republic carry out reforms that will lead to a lasting solution to the country's economic and civil problems.

My delegation would like to welcome the work of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) on security reform and also the progress being made by the Government on restructuring the defence services.

We share the concerns that have been expressed by others over the impact on the Central African Republic of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are interested in the recommendations that the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Mr. Essy, has made to mitigate the effects of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Central African Republic. We would be interested to learn what progress is being made in implementing those recommendations.

Finally, we hope that Governments will make speedy progress in releasing funds for security and development programmes in the Central African Republic.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): Today's meeting on the situation in the Central African Republic affords the Security Council another opportunity to focus on the challenges of post-conflict peace-building and how the international community can become constructively involved in the process of sustaining peace in the aftermath of a conflict. The Jamaican delegation welcomes this positive trend of open meetings which seek to focus on the specific needs of post-conflict societies. These meetings should serve as pointers in refining an effective strategy to be adopted by the United Nations in peacekeeping operations.

We are pleased to welcome Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mats Karlsson, Vice-President of the World Bank, and Mr. Frederick Lyons, Acting Deputy Director of the African Bureau of the United Nations Development Programme. We also look forward to hearing from the Minister for Reconciliation of the Central African Republic.

We are very pleased to have in our midst the Foreign Minister of Mauritius. We thank him for his remarks, which addressed the situation in the Central African Republic in a wider African context.

My delegation supports the elements of the presidential statement which is to be issued at the conclusion of this debate. I will therefore confine my remarks to a few pertinent issues.

The commitment to peace does not end with the cessation of hostilities in a conflict. Rather, the true measure of long-term peace involves the building of democratic, social and economic institutions and practices in order to consolidate and maintain peace. It involves national efforts for reconciliation, tolerance and the peaceful management of differences. Coupled with this, there must be a strong political will to effect change on the part of political leaders, as well as the requisite financial backing to put into effect sustainable programmes which will ensure that the gains of peace are not eroded.

The report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic, as well as the presentations made earlier in this debate, clearly attest to the critical need for paying concerted and focused attention to the deep-seated root causes of conflict in the Central African Republic. While my delegation recognizes the undoubted progress that has been made in recent years, we remain deeply concerned about the political tensions between the ruling party and the opposition, which no doubt have had a negative impact on the political landscape in the country. The reports have demonstrated just how tenuous the political situation is, and that this poses an obstacle to the fledgling democratic institutions. We therefore join in calling for a return to dialogue, as the continuing tensions can only serve to compromise the progress made towards the consolidation of peace in the country.

For its part, the Security Council cannot sit idly by as the situation deteriorates. As we have noted on previous occasions, the successful outcome of the post-conflict transition in the Central African Republic will stand as a test of the international community's resolve to enable formerly war-torn countries to establish the institutions necessary to prevent a return of conflict. A partnership between the Security Council, the Secretariat, United Nations funds, programmes and agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions is therefore of critical importance.

We appreciate the tremendous strides made by the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) in fulfilling its mandate, despite the limited resources. We commend in particular the Office's efforts to strengthen national capacities through training in human rights and humanitarian law. It is clear from the Secretary-General's report, however, that much remains to be done in institutionalizing the administration of justice. It is also worrying to learn that, owing to the lack of the necessary resources, there has been little progress in critical programmes such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. We urge the international partners to honour the commitments that have been made so that BONUCA's efforts can be more effective.

Jamaica welcomes the steps already undertaken by the World Bank in funding post-conflict peace-building projects in the Central African Republic. This includes the decision to approve a partial waiver of the conditions attached to the release of the $5 million second tranche of the fiscal consolidation credit. External debt, however, remains a serious challenge for the Central African Republic, and the initiatives undertaken by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to help the Government to address this and other related issues are steps in the right direction.

It will be recalled that in May of last year several Governments, in collaboration with the World Bank, convened a donors meeting to sensitize the international community and lead it to make tangible contributions to fund post-conflict peace-building efforts in the Central African Republic. It is regrettable, however, that so far the objective of that meeting has not been achieved. We urge the international community to fulfil the pledges made, in order to bring the transition to peace closer to a reality.

The impact of conflicts in the region on the situation in the Central African Republic is also one of great concern, as it is evident that the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has added to the general instability in the region. Indeed, the Secretary-General in his report has noted the negative economic and social impact of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and noted that this is compromising the progress that has been made towards the consolidation of the fragile peace and security in the Central African Republic. This has been exacerbated by the flow of refugees across the porous borders between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. As the Secretary-General's report clearly illustrates, the conditions of refugees on the southern border of the Central African Republic are indeed dire.

It is clear that only a comprehensive approach to the conflicts in the region will effectively stem the spill-over effects of those conflicts. We also concur with the Secretary-General that a solution to the crisis in the subregion depends on the restoration of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We welcome the appointment of Mr. Amara Essy as Special Envoy to assess the situation, and we look forward to a full report on his recommendations. We also commend the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian agencies that have sought to bring relief to the refugees and internally displaced persons.

Finally, my delegation continues to believe that the path to peace in the Central African Republic,

though a challenging one, can be reached. Let us view the deliberations of today's meeting as a demonstration of our resolve to ensure that the gains achieved so far will not be fruitless. Let us not become complacent or lax in our efforts to bring hope to the people of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Konfourou (Mali) (*spoke in French*): First of all, my delegation is pleased with the holding of this public meeting on peace-building efforts in the Central African Republic. I appreciate the helpful statement made by Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA). I also appreciate the statements made by Mr. Frederick Lyons, Acting Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Mr. Agba Otikpo Mezode, Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic; and Mr. Mats Karlsson, Vice-President of the World Bank. We also appreciate the presence among us at this meeting of the Council, and the relevant statement made by Mr. Anil Kumarsingh Gayan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of the Republic of Mauritius.

The information that has been provided indicates that progress is being made in the Central African Republic towards national reconciliation and strengthening peace and national unity. My delegation welcomes the new progress reported by the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic and by the Representative of the Secretary-General, in particular in the areas of disarmament, restructuring security and defence forces and respect for human rights by law enforcement officers.

My delegation regrets the slow pace of the demobilization and reintegration programme. While we thank donor countries for the efforts that have been made, we also invite them to provide further assistance in this area. Mali attaches particular importance to the consolidation of efforts in this regard.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the recent statement by the Government of the Central African Republic regarding settling some of the salary arrears due civil servants and the release of political prisoners. We trust this will mark the beginning of a de-escalation of the political and social situation in the country. In this regard, Mali calls for an open and frank dialogue among all the players in the Central African Republic.

We believe that settling the problem of refugees and displaced persons in the Central African Republic and other countries of the region would help promote regional stability. My delegation remains deeply concerned about the continuing social and political tensions in the country, which are not conducive to the process of peace and national reconciliation.

The human rights situation is also a cause for concern to my delegation. In that regard, we support the Secretary-General's idea for continuing to stress to the authorities of the Central African Republic the need to respect the rights of all its citizens, including those who have been accused.

We are also concerned about the very fragile economic situation in the Central African Republic, which has been aggravated by a disruption in fuel supplies. In this regard, Mali welcomes the Secretary-General's efforts, through the Bretton Woods institutions, to extend assistance to the Government of the Central African Republic so that it can resolve the financial problems confronting it. In that regard, we welcome the encouraging response on the part of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

However, my delegation continues to believe that no international support can replace the political will of the people of the Central African Republic to resolve their own problems and achieve national reconciliation. We urge all political actors in the country to carry out a constructive dialogue in the interests of all the people of the country.

Finally, we endorse the draft presidential statement before the Council.

Mr. Franco (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, and the representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank for their presentations regarding the situation in the Central African Republic. I would like in particular to welcome the presence among us today of the Minister of Culture of the Central African Republic. I also welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Mauritius, who was with us earlier today.

The report of the Secretary-General describes a state of affairs that is of concern to my delegation. We believe that today's open debate is a good opportunity to analyse the role of the United Nations in post-conflict situations.

The efforts of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) continue to move ahead. We are happy to learn that there has been progress in the areas of disarmament, restructuring the defence and security forces, and in respecting and promoting human rights. However, we note with concern that the current social and political tensions are threatening the steps that have been taken towards national reconciliation and the creation and strengthening of democratic institutions. The absence of dialogue among the country's political forces and the difficult economic situation imperil the efforts being made by both the Government and the international community.

We are also concerned about the repercussions of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the Central African Republic. We hope soon to hear the opinions and recommendations of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Amara Essy, as to how the negative effects of the Congolese conflict on the Central African Republic can be reduced, especially its humanitarian, economic, social and security consequences. As the Secretary-General points out in his report, the proliferation and illegal circulation of arms originating in neighbouring zones of conflict could contribute to a deterioration of the situation in the country.

It is clear that the responsibility for building peace and bringing about national reconciliation lies first and foremost with the people of the Central African Republic themselves. We believe, however, that the international community's contribution to this process is of fundamental importance, as the Central African Republic is a country with high rates of poverty, unemployment and malnutrition and few basic services. We therefore believe that there must be a high level of commitment and responsibility on the part of external actors.

Without ignoring the positive contributions of donor countries and multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, we are concerned about the inadequate financial resources and the prolonged delay on the part of the donor countries in honouring their commitments. This has made it difficult to implement the demobilization and reintegration programme, as the Secretary-General also mentioned in his report.

We should like to encourage the Government of President Patassé and all the political actors in the country to continue to work tirelessly towards reconciliation and dialogue. We also appeal to the international community and the Bretton Woods institutions to cooperate closely with the Government of the Central African Republic in continuing to support the strengthening of its democratic institutions and its political and economic stability.

My delegation supports the text of the presidential statement to be adopted as the outcome of this open debate.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report, and to thank Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, Representative of the Secretary-General, for further updating us on the situation. We are also grateful to the representatives of the United Nations Development Programme and of the World Bank for their briefings.

The Chinese delegation appreciates the enormous amount of work done by Mr. Sy and the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) in promoting and protecting human rights and strengthening the capacity of the law enforcement agencies there.

The political, economic and social situation in the Central African Republic is currently of great concern. We have noted the absence of dialogue between the Government and the opposition and the refusal of the opposition to cooperate with the Government, which is leading to tension in their relationship. Hostilities have increased, particularly in recent weeks, creating a serious impediment to national reconciliation, and we should like to express our concern in this regard. We hope that all the parties in the Central African Republic will summon up the political will to adopt specific measures. In particular, the Government and the opposition should undertake the necessary dialogue and alleviate the tension, thereby creating favourable conditions for bringing about national reconciliation. At the same time, we believe that the United Nations should further facilitate dialogue and reconciliation between the Government and the opposition.

It should be recognized that any deterioration in the social and economic situation in the Central African Republic would, in turn, have a negative impact on political reconciliation in that country and increase social unrest. China welcomes the intention of the Bretton Woods institutions to provide financial support to the Central African Republic. We hope that the Bretton Woods institutions and other donors will increase their financial support to the Central African Republic. We hope that all those donors who pledged at the most recent special meeting, held in New York in May, will implement their commitments, and we call upon them to do so in order to help the Central African Republic deal with its present difficulties.

We also hope that debt relief measures will be implemented even sooner. During the most recent forum on Central Africa, we announced that we would write off certain debts owed to China by the Central African Republic, and we hope that that action will contribute to increasing and improving the economic situation there. The international community should certainly consider long-term measures to improve the social and economic situation.

We have also noted that the Government of the Central African Republic has taken specific actions to re-establish its national defence and security forces. We express our concern about the fact that BONUCA convoys have been held up and attacked, and we hope that the Central African Republic will adopt effective measures to punish those responsible for those criminal activities and to guarantee the safety and security of BONUCA personnel and property.

We support the mission of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to assess on the ground the negative impact of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Central African Republic. We hope that the parties concerned will unite their efforts to create favourable external conditions for the early realization of national reconciliation and to improve social and economic conditions in the Central African Republic.

In conclusion, we support the presidential statement to be issued later.

Mr. Sergeev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Sy, and to the representatives of the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank for the statements that they made in the Security Council.

We have always supported efforts to build peace, achieve national reconciliation and strengthen democratic institutions in the Central African Republic. We greatly appreciate the work done by the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic, which is assisting the authorities in their efforts to strengthen the peace process and to involve the international community in helping the process of recovery in the country.

Like other members of the Council, we are disturbed by what the Secretary-General said in his report about tension in relations between the central Government and the opposition in the Central African Republic. As can be seen from the report, the opposition is still feeding on hopes that it can seize power again, even after being defeated at the ballot box, and it is relying on a confrontational approach. Given the background of social tension and the difficult economic situation, the absence of a constructive dialogue between the interested parties could have dangerous consequences for the future of post-conflict recovery of the country. Additional concern arises from the fact that the fragile peace and stability in the Central African Republic are being negatively affected by the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We support the appeal by the Secretary-General to the Government of the Central African Republic to take steps to reduce the tension between the Government and the opposition. Like other members of the Council, we believe that the people of the Central African Republic themselves bear the main responsibility for strengthening the peace process, and they must themselves demonstrate political will in the interests of national reconciliation. The international community, including the organs of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, must do all they can to help.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): I would like to thank the Representative of the Secretary-General, Cheikh Tidiane Sy, for briefing us today on developments in the Central African Republic. I am also grateful to Mr. Lyons of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and to Mr. Karlsson of the World Bank. Those organizations are closely involved in the Central African Republic, and their insight and experience are

a most useful guide to the Council. We are also grateful to the Group of Friends of the Central African Republic for their work. In addition, we welcome Mr. Mezode, Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic, and we thank him for joining us today.

We welcome the progress that the Government of the Central African Republic has made, as noted in the Secretary-General's report, particularly towards disarmament and the restructuring of the defence and the security forces.

At the same time, however, the Secretary-General's report presents an unsatisfactory picture of the economic and political situation in the Central African Republic. The consolidation of democratic institutions and the promotion of national reconciliation are prerequisites to political, economic and social development. The absence of any dialogue with the opposition parties is very regrettable. However, we note that the Secretary-General recognized that the opposition parties have themselves often adopted a confrontational approach. We concur with the Secretary-General's assessment that it is up to the Central African people themselves to summon the political will necessary and work towards national reconciliation.

I would like at this point to acknowledge the straight talking this morning by the Foreign Minister of Mauritius, when, in a wider comment, he rooted conflicts in some African countries in the absence of good governance, non-respect for democratic institutions, persistent violations of human rights and lack of transparency.

The action taken by the Central African Government in December to disperse an opposition rally, which was followed by the arrest and trial of parliamentarians, has only served to heighten tension. We would urge all sides, Government and opposition, to enter into a serious dialogue in order to preserve the democratic institutions so recently established. We call on the Government of the Central African Republic to follow through on a number of confidence-building measures, such as access to the State-run media, as was promised by Prime Minister Anicet Georges Doleguele, in order to help improve the relationship between the sides.

On the human rights front, the report highlights a number of serious violations, although the decrease in the level of summary and extrajudicial executions is to be welcomed. In particular, we deplore the violations that have been taking place in the guise of "neighbourhood justice", referred to earlier by Representative Sy. We look forward to hearing definitive confirmation of an end to these quite unacceptable practices. The Government must take the necessary and appropriate action in this regard. We welcome the work that the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic has done in training law enforcement officers. This is a significant contribution towards increasing confidence in State justice and law and order. We note Representative Sy's comment that international donor support is also needed in this area.

The serious economic situation in the country is not helped by the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we share the Secretary-General's assessment that without the restoration of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there can be no lasting solution to the instability in the region.

We welcome the positive responses that the Secretary General has received from the President of the World Bank and from the International Monetary Fund in response to his letters of November last year. The approval of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative debt relief package should enable the resumption of payment of salaries and a gradual settlement of arrears in wages and help to defuse what has been described as the serious and explosive social situation in the country. Likewise, structural reforms and poverty reduction programmes of the Government will also benefit from the HIPC package. Vice-President Karlsson's positive report this morning regarding Prime Minister Doleguele's commitment and that of his Government to defend effectively their national economic interests both internally and externally is heartening.

The international community has already invested heavily in peace in the Central African Republic and must be encouraged to continue to do so. However, the necessary return on this investment can come only through the restoration of political stability, which in turn must come from the people and institutions of the Central African Republic. We strongly support the Secretary-General's call for the international financial institutions to contribute constructively to a

collaborative effort with the Government of the Central African Republic in helping to restore social and political stability to the country.

Finally, may I express Ireland's support for the proposed presidential statement.

Mr. Strommen (Norway): Allow me, like others, to thank the Representative of the Secretary-General, the representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the representative of the World Bank. Furthermore, my thanks go to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mauritius for his very interesting intervention. We look forward to hearing the Minister of the Central African Republic later this morning.

The Central African Republic is an example of the need for a comprehensive approach to post-conflict peace-building. The situation requires the coordination and mobilization of resources by the international community and a clear commitment by the national authorities dialogue and reconciliation in order to create a climate conducive to development. There is a need for a number of different measures in order to help institution-building, strengthen respect for human rights and achieve disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. There is also a need for humanitarian efforts, in order to assist the growing number of refugees in the areas bordering the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Norway supports the efforts of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) to strengthen national capacity to enforce and protect human rights and the rule of law, for disarmament and for restructuring the defence and security forces. We welcome the progress that has been made in these areas.

Despite these efforts and achievements, the current situation in the Central African Republic, as reflected in the Secretary-General's report, gives reason for concern. The negative economic developments and the social unrest increase the possibility of instability and conflict and threaten reconstruction efforts. These negative developments must be reversed. It is therefore important that the Security Council give a clear signal to the Government of the Central African Republic and other political actors on the need to summon the necessary political will and work towards national reconciliation, as pointed out by the Secretary-General.

We are encouraged by the achievements made towards disarmament described in the report. However, the influx of new weapons threatens to cancel out the positive results obtained. The recent influx of illegal weapons is closely connected to the conflicts in the countries neighbouring the Central African Republic. This clearly indicates the need for a regional approach. Without a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic is likely to face a continued influx of refugees and problems with illegal trafficking of arms.

In connection with the special donors meeting held in New York in May last year, my Government has contributed $300,000 to the special programme on arms collection, demobilization and reintegration. We are concerned by the information given in paragraph 25 of the Secretary-General's report that it has been necessary to suspend this programme due to the lack of financial resources and the delay in acting on the pledges that were made, and I would like to urge all donors to follow up on their commitments.

Finally, Norway supports the presidential statement.

Mr. Kuchyinski (Ukraine): We would also like to join previous speakers in commending the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Sy, for his briefing, which provides a comprehensive analysis of the situation in the Central African Republic and identifies the progress and challenges of the peace-building process in the country. We strongly support the activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), and we would like to express our appreciation to Mr. Sy for his continued efforts, as the Head of BONUCA, in support of the country's stabilization process.

We warmly welcome the Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic, Mr. Mezode, and we look forward to the statement he will be making later this morning. We are also pleased to note the comprehensive statement made by the Minister for Foreign Relations and Regional Cooperation of Mauritius.

We underscore the importance of the fact that representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank are participating in today's debate, as the role of these

institutions in the process of economic recovery and development of the Central African Republic cannot be overestimated.

We welcome the presence of the Permanent Observer for the International Organization of la Francophonie to the United Nations, Mr. Bouabid, who is taking part in the Council's meeting this morning. We would like to commend the organization on its valuable contribution to the post-conflict peace-building process in the Central African Republic.

Our discussions today on the challenges of post-conflict peace-building in the Central African Republic are a logical extension of the recent deliberations of the Council on the situation in Guinea-Bissau. After the successful completion of the transition from a United Nations peacekeeping operation to a post-conflict peace-building presence in the Central African Republic, the country focused on a wide range of post-conflict challenges related to the consolidation of peace and stability. We are pleased to note that the Government of the Central African Republic has made significant progress in the disarmament and restructuring of the defence and security forces.

We also welcome the number of positive developments that have taken place in the human rights situation in the Central African Republic. In this context, we welcome the activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) aimed at promoting awareness of human rights issues in the country. Much remains to be done in this respect, and the assistance of the international community is of particular importance.

In the light of the discussions that the Council held last week, we would like to note with satisfaction the recent decision of the President of the Central African Republic on the creation of an HIV/AIDS treatment centre. We were also pleased to hear from the representative of the World Bank, Mr. Karlsson, that the problem of HIV/AIDS has been given high priority in the Bank's strategy in the country.

The regional context of the situation in the Central African Republic continues to be a source of serious concern. The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which resulted in a large number of refugees and an oil crisis in the Central African Republic, has severe implications for the humanitarian, economic, social and security situation in the country.

The economic sector in the Central African Republic remains very fragile and is in need of long-term solutions. In this respect, we welcome the decision by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on the provision of financial assistance to support economic recovery in the country.

Indeed, the realization of political, social and economic strategies in the Central African Republic requires a consistent and coordinated approach by the international community. At the same time, the primary role in strengthening the spirit of national reconciliation, and the main responsibility for peace and stability in the country, rests with the Government and the people of the Central African Republic. It is therefore important that the parties engage in a constructive political dialogue towards national reconciliation.

We believe that the presidential statement that we are about to adopt will send a strong signal of support and encouragement to the Government and people of the Central African Republic to consolidate the progress made towards the restoration of stability and the promotion of sustainable peace and development.

Mr. Minton (United States of America): The United States delegation would like to join our colleagues here today in thanking our guests for the very useful briefings they provided and also in welcoming the Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic and the Foreign Minister of Mauritius and thanking him for his comments, which led off this discussion.

I would like to briefly touch on some of the themes that have already been mentioned around the table here today with which we agree. In our view, the overarching issue in this discussion is, of course, good governance. Good governance is the necessary foundation for the creation of a peaceful, democratic and self-sufficient society. In the end, the Government of the Central African Republic must take the leading role, albeit with the support of the international community, in resolving the country's political and economic hardships.

We are encouraged at the positive actions taken by President Patassé in the area of disarmament and the

restructuring of defence and security forces. These efforts should continue.

There is justified concern, however, at the absence of political dialogue in the Central African Republic. We urge President Patassé to take the necessary steps to resume talks between his Government and members of the opposition parties. We urge the opposition as well to be willing to work towards a peaceful solution to the existing stand-off. Both sides must refrain from inflammatory accusations and actions and approach negotiations in a spirit of consensus-building and national reconciliation.

The United States especially appreciates the efforts of Prime Minister Doleguele and others in the Government to implement economic reforms. We strongly urge them to stay on the path of economic reform proposed by the Bretton Woods institutions. Controlling expenditures, safeguarding the use of taxes and other revenues to alleviate poverty, eliminating corruption, and strictly adhering to the sound economic planning set forth are actions which are vital to the development of a strong and stable Central African Republic.

I should like to second the delegation of Ukraine in taking note of Mr. Karlsson's comments about the efforts of the Government in dealing with the threat posed by HIV/AIDS to the social structure of the country. The efforts of the Government, supported enthusiastically by the World Bank, should be commended. This is a necessary commitment to addressing this problem in an area that has been ravaged by HIV/AIDS. This is a very serious commitment, and we take note of it.

Although the people of the Central African Republic themselves bear primary responsibility for their own political and economic reform, we must recognize that no country exists in a vacuum. The Central African Republic is directly affected by events occurring in neighbouring States, particularly the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The United States is particularly concerned about the large number of refugees on the southern border of the Central African Republic and their potentially destabilizing impact on the economic and political situation in the country. In this regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to send Mr. Amara Essy, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, to the region to assess the impact of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Central African Republic.

Both the international community at large and the countries of the region must provide assistance to the Central African Republic in its efforts to become a self-reliant and democratic State. We especially call upon regional actors to take all necessary steps to reopen the Congo and Ubangi rivers in order to ease the disruption of river traffic and alleviate the fuel crisis that threatens the fragile economy of the country. The reopening of these rivers is of critical humanitarian and economic importance for all residents of the river basin.

The Central African Republic, in a larger sense, represents an important test case for the United Nations and the international community to assist a struggling government in institution-building and reform measures following the resolution of conflict and a successful United Nations peacekeeping mission. We congratulate Representative Sy and his staff for recognizing this fact and for their hard work to make this endeavour a success. In our view, the outcome of these efforts will have an impact and an influence transcending the Central African Republic and set an example for similar partnerships between Governments, this Organization and the international community in future.

Mr. Ben Mustapha (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to welcome to New York Minister Agba Otikpo Mezode and to thank our guests from the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the International Organization of la Francophonie for their presence and for their exhaustive statements.

The Tunisian delegation has read with interest the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and the work of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA). I should like in particular to thank Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, the Representative of the Secretary-General in the Central African Republic, for his briefing. We have noted the progress that has been made, but we remain deeply concerned by the situation that has prevailed there for some time, as described by Mr. Sy.

It is clear that the consequences of the 1996 crisis are still being felt everywhere and that, despite enormous efforts, the challenges facing the Central

African Government are far from having been met because of its many difficulties at the political, socio-economic and security levels.

My delegation would encourage all parties to begin a constructive dialogue in order to ensure the survival of the young democratic institutions of the country, with the ultimate goal of achieving genuine and lasting national reconciliation. In that respect, the work of the Secretary-General's Representative, Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, and BONUCA will be invaluable and will certainly facilitate negotiations among all the political forces of the country.

The economic situation in the Central African Republic is also disturbing and could easily lead to political instability. It is obvious that the Central African Government is incapable of leading the country out of this situation without the assistance of the international community and the Bretton Woods institutions. We therefore welcome the decision of the World Bank to approve the release of the second tranche of the fiscal consolidation credit. We also welcome the decision of the International Monetary Fund to approve the Central African Government's request for debt relief. This initiative will allow the Government to resume the regular payment of wages and gradually to pay off its arrears, which cannot fail to soothe the growing social anger in the country.

My delegation believes that, despite tensions and a few incidents, the security and military situation in the Central African Republic is encouraging. My delegation welcomes the efforts of the Government in this connection and wishes in particular to commend the initiatives that have allowed the defence and security forces to be restructured, units to be deployed in the countryside and ex-combatants to be reintegrated into the army.

We also welcome the significant results achieved in the disarmament process, which have allowed the Government to recover 95 per cent of heavy weapons and 65 per cent of light weapons. This positive picture is somewhat overshadowed, however, by the inability of the Central African Government, due to a lack of resources, to pursue the programme to demobilize and reintegrate ex-combatants. Moreover, the emergence in the country of new weapons from neighbouring States in conflict demonstrates that the threat of destabilization is ever present and that the Central African Government must remain vigilant and intensify its efforts to end the illicit distribution of these new weapons.

My delegation believes nevertheless that the search for a definitive solution to all these security, humanitarian and socio-economic problems in the Central African Republic would benefit in some ways from the adoption of a comprehensive subregional approach. In this respect, we feel that the assessment to be carried out by Mr. Amara Essy, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to the subregion, will be very helpful to the Council.

Finally, we wish to pay tribute to the strenuous efforts of BONUCA. We deplore the recent incident involving one of its staff members. Much remains to be done, inter alia, in combating such abuses as the so-called "neighbourhood justice". We are convinced that the many steps being taken by BONUCA are extremely helpful to the Government and people of the Central African Republic and will assist in particular in fostering a culture of peace, dialogue and tolerance throughout the country.

The Government of the Central African Republic has demonstrated its firm resolve to create conditions conducive to lasting peace and development. Thus, aware of all the political, security, economic and social priorities it faces, we join the Secretary-General's appeal to the international community, which has always supported peace-building efforts in the Central African Republic and elsewhere, to reiterate its commitment to that country and to stand with it at this sensitive phase of peace-building.

We support the presidential statement to be adopted later today.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of Relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Mezode (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I shall have to beg the Council's indulgence, being so moved by the wealth of analyses and reflections I have heard in this Chamber.

As the Security Council, under your leadership, Sir, is meeting on the situation in my country, following the issuance of the Secretary-General's latest report and following up on the activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), I wish to convey the

greetings of Mr. Ange-Félix Patassé, Head of State, Government and the people of the Central African Republic. He sincerely hopes, Mr. President, that your country, Singapore, and its valiant people — occupying a particularly choice place in the concert of nations at the dawn of the twenty-first century — will continue to contribute effectively to the consolidation of peace throughout the world. He has also charged me with conveying the enormous gratitude of the Central African Republic to the international community, international organizations, the Organization of African Unity, the European Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie and to our friends and partners for their invaluable and tireless contributions to restoring and securing the peace and to establishing conditions for genuine and lasting stability and economic revival in my country.

I have not come solely to discuss our profound gratitude. I have come above all solemnly to reaffirm that our authorities, in the interests and on behalf of the Central African people, remain faithful to the indispensable option of preserving national peace and unity and of consolidating our democratic achievements, despite the logic of confrontation tirelessly pursued by some extremist political leaders. Given the tremendous risks posed by the strategies of rupture and destabilization to the process of consolidating the achievements of our fledgling democracy, it is absolutely indispensable and urgent that we submit to the Security Council, in total objectivity and without seeking to evoke superficial emotion, our correct interpretation of the prevailing situation.

In his toast on 1 December 2000, the national holiday of the Central African Republic, President Ange-Félix Patassé declared that there was no political crisis in the Central African Republic; there was a social crisis. This is not to minimize the social crisis, but to call attention to the level of confusion.

I do not know whether this is traditional in this forum, but if I may, I would like to commend the objectivity and the comprehensive nature of elements of the report of the Representative in Bangui. His conclusions capture completely the expectations of the people of the Central African Republic and of their Government. How can we remain unmoved when hearing the eminent personalities who have addressed this forum and expressed their genuine and sincere concern for the problems of the people of the Central African Republic?

I will also pay tribute to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the island of Mauritius, and I share his relevant analysis of the situation in Africa as a whole and in particular in my country.

I would like to renew my sincere compliments to the Ambassador of France and to recall the significant role played by his country in the restoration of peace and the establishment of democracy in the Central African Republic. By giving wise advice to all parties, BONUCA and France continue to work tirelessly to consolidate what has been achieved, and the same can be said for most of the major countries that are represented in the Central African Republic.

It is true that, since the middle of the year 2000, in the capital of the Central African Republic there have been demonstrations inspired by the extremist political parties, which have lost their popularity and are desperately grasping at methods to revive themselves, as well as seeking short cuts to a transfer of power. In their reckless search to take and exercise the power that they were not able to obtain through the free elections — which were supervised, barely a year ago, by the international community — these extremist political parties are leaving no stone unturned, inventing or provoking incidents when they do not exist, and seizing on whatever incidents do occur and making political issues out of them. This is the case with the essentially legitimate protest movement being organized by the trade unions that represent civil servants and Government officials. In my country we call this political theatre. But we would turn to the neutral observers of the Central African situation and ask them what our country, the Central African Republic, really needs in the present situation: civic education or political theatre?

There should no. be a political crisis in the Central African Republic. Why is this? Simply because 95 per cent of the republican institutions provided for by the 14 January 1995 Constitution have already been established and they are functioning normally and well.

Let us look at a few examples, in particular the National Assembly. It is composed of six parliamentary groups, five of which are of the opposition. In every debate, the Chairmen of the parliamentary groups, depending on the importance of the project or issue, have 15 to 20 minutes. If we total the statements, the

opposition has 75 minutes of air time every day, since all the debates are broadcast in their entirety via the national radio — and some are broadcast on television as well. Added to this are the individual statements, each of which is 10 minutes long. And given the allure of microphones and the camera, everyone wants to speak, and the opposition representatives do not forgo the opportunity, even if it is only to repeat themselves, to incite violence or to slander others. None of these representatives has been harassed in any way, despite the fact that they say anything and everything.

The judicial branch also functions independently. The most recent verdicts provide vigorous proof of this. However, the Government should have intervened, because a crime had been observed: the refusal to comply with a ban on meetings, which had been issued because of the risks posed. But the Government allowed the justices to say what was just. And their ruling, of which the Council has been informed, supports the policy of trying to calm the situation — and this without the intervention of the Government. Civil society also plays a role, and sometimes with disturbing partisanship.

As for the Government, it never stops reiterating that it is open to dialogue, to openness. The head of the Government, Mr. Anicet Doleguele, repeats this constantly. The President of the Republic, whenever there is a national event — be it happy or sad — invites all the political and opinion leaders, including his predecessors. Some attend, but the extremists continue to hide behind their refusal to enter into dialogue.

The crisis experienced by the Central African Republic during the last six months is a social crisis rooted in events of 1991-92, when the fight for multi-party politics took place. This period was characterized by several series of strikes, by paralysis. It was quickly followed by the presidential campaign, in which there was excessive tribalization even in the administration and the defence forces. Those who witnessed the events of 1996 and 1997 — that is, the mutinies — were able to see the extent of the violence provoked on all sides by this excessive tribalization of social life.

After those two years of mutiny during which almost everything was destroyed and there was no fundamental authority, the Central African Republic found itself 12 months in arrears on civil servants' salaries. Despite the goodwill and intentions that were expressed here and there, no emergency plan was devised to address the tremendous needs. The wait-and-see policy adopted in response to the mutinies was pursued until 1999, because we had two major events: the legislative elections in 1998 and the presidential elections in 1999. These two elections were considered to be risky, and thus donors and other economic actors did not take steps to intervene. Nonetheless, the Government paid staff salaries at the end of every month until May 2000, but it had no further means for tackling the thorny problem of paying the 12 months' arrears that followed the mutinies.

I would like to recall as well that when it came to power, the new regime inherited 13 months' arrears. However, as has been said here, with *débrouillardise* — or some call it corruption — prevailing in the country, many Central Africans succeeded in getting their salaries arrears from 1993 paid.

Today accounting for the civil servants who have not been reimbursed for their arrears from 1993, we arrive at a total of 9 billion CFA francs, which is the equivalent of five months' back salaries inherited from the previous Government. These five months plus the 12 months that were passed on as a result of the mutinies add up to 17 months, which will soon be 16, since in the next 10 days we will be paying salaries that will finish off the three months just referred to here.

In sum, when I left Bangui on Saturday, the Government had already paid — on Friday, 19 January, and Saturday, 20 January — three months' back salaries to civil servants. Today, 1999 has been entirely paid off.

I would like to clarify what has been written and said about civil servants not having been paid for an entire year. That is inaccurate. Up until the crisis of May 2000, we had been making monthly payments on salary backlogs under a system that may have seemed a bit unorthodox. In other words, instead of making payments from the budget for the current year, 2001, the budget in place made it possible to make payments for the 1999 and 2000 arrears. This means that payments due in the current year are deferred to the following year, thereby making it possible to pay salaries regularly or even monthly. It was only with the emergence of the fuel crisis in May — a perverse effect of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — that civil servants had to live for two or three months without being paid. But we cleared up the 1999 arrears last September.

Everything has been said. The comments were objective and the suggestions relevant. I do not wish to go on too long, but I would like to make some concluding comments to the Council. We believe that the systematic destruction of the social and economic infrastructure that began in 1991-1992 and worsened with the mutiny of 1997 has become even more serious with the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its perverse effects. The increased precariousness of the infrastructure that resulted from the May 2000 fuel crisis — among whose perverse effects have been complications in our dealings with financial institutions on the second year of the programme — added to our foreign debt. Finally, the logic of political recovery implemented by extremist parties constitutes today the true framework of the worsening of the crisis in the Central African Republic.

The Government has never deprived civil servants of the rights they claim. But it is essential to understand that the state of the country and the national effort that must be made to achieve concrete and realistic solutions are constantly being jeopardized by the irresponsible activities of certain corrupt politicians who since independence have fostered tendencies towards anarchy. Those trends can be found both in the majority and in the opposition and present a major obstacle to the campaign to fight corruption and to extend good governance, the latter being one of the Government's current projects to revive the economy.

Democrats everywhere must understand that if taking and managing power is not carried out in keeping with electoral rules, any number of temptations can arise — including thinking that the course of events can be altered in the streets. That is the logic that some parties are using in their strategies to win power. It is also a logic that calls for them to occupy the streets constantly by infiltrating and taking over student, union and any other demonstrations that may take place. It also sometimes includes relying on examples taken out of their social or political contexts from such places as Yugoslavia, Côte d'Ivoire and even Poland, where Lech Walesa was able to take power; he was a trade unionist too. Under this logic, trade unionists in our country believe they should take power.

We in the Central African Republic firmly believe that the urgency of the situation does not call for closing ourselves off nor for seeking methods that are supposedly perceived as authentic. What is urgent for the people and Government of the Central African Republic is to consolidate democratic achievements. The essential national expectation with regard to the issues at hand is for stabilization of a State that is reborn from the ashes of the mutinies that severely challenged national unity. What is important for us is for there to be a resumption of economic activity that generates our own resources to meet the immense needs and desires of our population, in addition to the assistance we hope for from the international community.

We in the Central African Republic are convinced that the success and consolidation of our fledgling democracy does not imply the succession of new teams in accordance with an illegitimate timetable. Instead, it means that the team in place should complete its mandate and organize free, fair and democratic elections that bring about genuine political transition. Any process that deviates from this classic pattern would distort the democratic ideal, which is a justified aspiration of people. This seems basic, but it must be clearly understood if we are to avoid any upheaval or divisions along ethnic, tribal, regional or even religious lines.

We are convinced of the need for effective rule of law. Despite what has been written and said, human rights have never been of as much concern to our leaders as they are now. The many seminars organized by non-governmental organizations, BONUCA, and the Government itself bear witness to that fact. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which oversees human rights, is carrying out very intensive activities in my country. The official, who is a woman, visits the few remaining prisons in Bangui, as well as police detention centres. She speaks quite freely, not as a civil servant, of the fate of detained persons. There is not a single political prisoner among the approximately 1,100 prisoners we have.

With regard to freedom of expression, I said a few moments ago that parliamentary debates are broadcast in their entirety in both French and Sango. This means that representatives may speak freely to criticize or say whatever they wish. The media publishes whatever they want to. I have brought a few copies of opposition newspapers with me. Some of these newspapers say, for instance, that it was the trade unions that broke off the dialogue with the Government. Another publication even said that the opposition parties are saying "nyet" to President

Patassé. All this corroborates what some have said here.

The burden is shared here, and the other side also bears responsibility for refusal to engage in dialogue. When one sees our newspapers, he will realize that quite a few countries would envy the freedom we have to say whatever we want and to criticize, even vilify, the President, ministers and members of Parliament. Freedom of expression exists and thrives in our country. There has been neither censorship nor closings of media outlets, either national or international ones. There have been no police visits of any sort to the headquarters of political or professional groups.

To conclude, there are no militias of the Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People (MPLC) or of the governing party in Bangui. This is somewhat like the Loch Ness monster: much is said about it, but no one has actually ever seen it, just as no one has ever been able to find these militias or to count their numbers. This is all part of the strategy to spread disinformation and slander the Government.

Reference has been made here to a lack of dialogue between the opposition and the Government — between the opposition leaders and the President of the Republic. But, as I have already said, the appointed institutions have always expressed their willingness to act. It is true, as has been said here, and from reading from what has been written, that the President was annoyed to meet with the opposition leaders in June and July. But, as I said, on sad, non-political occasions, they sometimes visit. Mr. Goumba, one of the radicals, went to the home of the late Mrs. Patassé to pay tribute to her remains. This was a gesture of understanding, because in our tradition, when there is a death, we cease quarrelling and meet together, which calms the situation to some extent. Again, contrary to what has been said, freedom does exist, as I said earlier. It is not ideal, but we are all doing our best.

Democracy and the rule of law also dictate that everyone accept what we call the principle of the primacy of law. This may sound a little pretentious, but anyone having an elected or administrative responsibility must obey the law. One cannot flout the law just because one is a representative — still less if one is a president or a minister. Ministers are always being monitored, so they are not able to do that. Thus, no one is above the law.

I assure the Council that, in order to face up to all of these difficulties — all the situations with which the Security Council is rightly concerned — the Government intends to shoulder the full burden of its responsibility and to respect its commitments, as we repeat the simple but powerful words of Boganda, the father of our nation. He said, "Let us not say a great deal, but let us work very hard", and "We cannot feed a people with politics".

We ask the Council to be understanding. The Council will see that, if we are given the means to help us make a start, and a little time, the Central African Republic will become a haven of peace — the Switzerland of Africa — as it was known to be some 30 years ago.

I should like to thank the United Nations, the Security Council, the international and non-governmental organizations and the friends and partners of the Central African Republic. The statements that we have heard today will comfort us and encourage us to do better. We are willing to do so. I hope that Radio Ndeke Luka, which is the civic education vehicle for BONUCA, will be able to obtain cassette recordings of today's statements so that all of us in the Central African Republic can listen, time and again, to the wisdom that has been expressed here today.

I should like to thank you, Mr. President, and the Council for your generosity and attention.

The President: I thank the Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of Relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic for his kind words addressed to me and to my country.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the Permanent Observer for the International Organization of la Francophonie to the United Nations, Mr. Ridha Bouabid, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 if its provisional rules of procedure.

I invite Mr. Bouabid to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Bouabid (*spoke in French*): The International Organization of la Francophonie is concerned about the current situation in the Central African Republic, which is a State member of our organization. Reconstruction and peace-building efforts

in that country, in support of which, in May 2000, the United Nations organized a special meeting on the Central African Republic and its foreign partners for security and development, are currently being jeopardized by serious tensions resulting from disturbing economic and social circumstances and the fragile political situation.

The economic and social crisis in the country is characterized mainly by fuel-supply problems resulting from the situation prevailing in the region, in particular the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and by the recurrent problem of salary arrears, with the strikes and social unrest that that unleashes. Because the political situation is also tense — mainly because there is no dialogue between the authorities and the opposition — the social crisis in the Central African Republic could endanger reconciliation efforts in the country.

The International Organization of la Francophonie has always demonstrated its solidarity with the Central African Republic. In the wake of the mutinies in 1996 and 1997, African States members of la Francophonie undertook mediation efforts leading to the signing of the Bangui Agreements and sent an inter-African force to the area — the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB). The Mission was made up of troops from six francophone African countries, and it later became the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA), with the participation of the same countries.

On many occasions, the Security Council expressed its appreciation to MISAB and MINURCA and congratulated them on the work they did and on their invaluable contribution to calming the situation in the country. However, during this, the most delicate phase through which the country has passed since MINURCA left, the results of the international community's efforts to date — which remain fragile — will be wasted if they are not properly consolidated. That is why the International Organization of la Francophonie would like sincerely to thank you, Sir, for focusing the attention of the international community on this problem during your presidency and for inscribing the item on the agenda of the Council.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his report and welcome the Minister for Civic Responsibility in charge of Relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic. We also welcome Ambassador Sy, the Representative of the Secretary-General, and thank him for the efforts that he has continued to make as head of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) and for his cooperation with the International Organization of la Francophonie.

I should also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for sending a Special Envoy, Mr. Amara Essy, former President of the General Assembly and former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, to the region to assess the impact of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Central African Republic and the Republic of the Congo. We hope, with a view to a settlement of the conflict, that Minister Essy's recommendations will help to make us more aware of the need for urgent action by the international community to offset the impact of the conflict on neighbouring countries, particularly the Central African Republic, a landlocked country whose economic potential cannot be developed without at least a semblance of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and security along the length of the Ubangi River, which is essential for imports to and exports from the Central African Republic.

We encourage the international community to do whatever it can to help the Central African Republic, as well as the Republic of the Congo, to deal with the problem caused by the large number of refugees fleeing conflict zones in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also call for urgent and effective action to ensure security in shipping lanes, particularly in the Ubangi River, in order to prevent the current crisis from worsening further and the central African economy being for a long time to come.

The Bretton Woods institutions also have a major role to play. The recent steps taken by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are in the right direction. We welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to approach those institutions to make them aware of the particularly fragile situation in the Central African Republic. We encourage him to continue what he is doing and to draw the attention of the World Bank and the IMF to the need to take into account the situation of countries emerging from a conflict and to make conditions for granting financial assistance to these countries flexible.

The International Organization of la Francophonie has supported the return to stability and the revival of the democratization process in the Central African Republic, inter alia, by providing assistance and sending observers to the 1998 legislative elections and the 1999 presidential elections and by sending a goodwill mission in March 1999 and a needs assessment mission in May 2000. It intends to follow up and strengthen the implementation of concrete measures to enable the Central African Republic to benefit fully from programmes that La Francophonie carries out through its intergovernmental agency and its other operators.

These measures, which seek to support Government efforts and programmes linked to governance, the strengthening of democratic institutions, combating poverty, economic and social reintegration of youth or even new information and communication technologies, were announced at the special meeting in May 2000 at New York. They must be implemented, in cooperation with the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) in Bangui and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), within the framework of the agreements reached by la Francophonie with the United Nations and UNDP.

For example, la Francophonie participated in the holding of a national seminar for Central African parliamentarians, from 9 to 11 October 2000, on the role of Parliament with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights, which was organized by BONUCA, in partnership with the National Assembly, the Ministry for Relations with the Parliament and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In recent weeks, the Secretary-General of our organization, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, asked Mr. Alioune Sene, the former Ambassador of Senegal to Geneva, to carry out a mission in the Central African Republic to study ways of strengthening francophone cooperation in that country and to identify possible assistance to complement efforts under way to facilitate a dialogue between the Central African political forces. Ambassador Sene's mission to the Central African Republic took place from 15 to 22 January 2001 and was received by President Patassé. Its mandate also included an updated assessment of concrete steps of cooperation in close liaison with the other partners involved, that could strengthen the capacities of all actors and players in democratic life and the peace process in the Central African Republic. On the basis of its numerous contacts, the mission identified a number of steps that could be quickly implemented.

This would relate particularly to contributing, in cooperation with BONUCA and UNDP, to a comprehensive assessment initiative on the implementation of the Bangui Agreements and the National Reconciliation Pact in order to renew dialogue among all the actors, public and private. It would also concern making available Francophone expertise for drafting texts that advocate a calmer political life, as provided for in the Agreements and, finally, significant support for the functioning and revitalization of control of monitoring, regulation and mediation institutions, which are of major importance at this stage.

In conclusion, I wish to stress the importance of the role of the Central Africans themselves to ensure their country's return to lasting peace, security and stability. The responsibility for that is primarily incumbent on the Government, the political leaders and the Central African people, not the international community. Their resolve, commitment and actions to achieve the objectives, through dialogue, can only further encourage the international community to help them.

The Central African Republic has played an active role in preparing and developing the international symposium on the exercise of democracy, rights and freedom within the francophone sphere, held at Bamako from 1 to 3 November 2000. The authorities of that country are parties to the principles set forth there and commitments entered into under the Bamako Declaration, which particularly sets down the principle that democracy requires dialogue at all levels, among citizens, social partners and political parties, as well as between the State and civil society.

What the Central African Republic needs most today is a calmer political life. Among the commitments undertaken in the Bamako Declaration for a calmer political life is that of having all political parties — from the opposition as well as from the majority — participate in the national, regional and local political life, in order to settle conflicts of interest peacefully, as well as to prevent — and, if the need arises, to settle peacefully — disputes and tensions between political and social groups by exploring all appropriate mechanisms and means.

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm to the Central African authorities and people the International Organization of la Francophonie's commitment to lend all its support to national and international efforts for a calmer political life in the Central African Republic.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Singapore.

Like many of my colleagues here, I too have a prepared set of remarks, but in the interest of time and with a view to responding to or building upon the comments that have been made here, I will try to speak extemporaneously.

First, I would like to thank very much, like all my colleagues, the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Sy, as well as the representatives of the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for their contributions. I would also like to warmly welcome the Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of Relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic, Mr. Agba Otikpo Mezode. We truly appreciate his presence here after the very long journey he has made to get here. While we have benefited from listening to all of you, we hope that all of you have also benefited from listening to the comments that have been made today.

As the Ambassador of France said in one of the early statements, there clearly is a need for an integrated approach in peace-building, and, as he said, the Security Council can play a valuable role in promoting an integrated approach towards peace-building, and we hope that this debate has contributed in that sense. Of course, we hope that the Ambassador of France will elaborate on his comments when we next discuss the question of the Central African Republic.

It is clear that the United Nations has been actively engaged in the Central African Republic for quite a while. In fact, a lot of praise has gone to the work of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA). As members know, MINURCA completed its work, and there is now a fear, as indeed the previous speaker mentioned, that the good work done by MINURCA may be lost as a result of recent developments.

If there is one theme that I think we heard consistently this morning in the discussions, it was that it is clear that there is a need to promote national reconciliation in the Central African Republic, and I think if there were two words that we heard over and over and over this morning, they were the words "national reconciliation".

It is also true that several hurdles need to be cleared before we can achieve a durable peace and lay a firm basis for the long-term development of the Central African Republic. Let me mention four hurdles.

The first hurdle is the need for full and prompt implementation of the outstanding elements of the Bangui Agreement and the National Reconciliation Pact.

These areas in particular remain central to the post-conflict peace-building efforts. These include, first, the strengthening of the police force and the restructuring of the armed forces to achieve greater ethnic and geographical balance; secondly, demobilization and reintegration of ex-soldiers; and thirdly, measures to strengthen the economy. These are not new elements. These have been mentioned by previous speakers.

The second hurdle, which was also mentioned by several speakers, including our colleagues from the World Bank and UNDP, was the need to raise sufficient funds in support of peace-building efforts.

The third hurdle that I think we also need to address relates to the root causes of the problems being faced now. The latest report of the Secretary-General clearly paints a bleak picture of a political stalemate, a deepening social crisis and a precarious economic situation, but it is not clear whether the report analyses sufficiently what the root causes are of the problems currently faced by the Central African Republic.

In this regard, I would like also to mention that one particular point that seemed to surface consistently in remarks today was the need to address the problem of arrears in salaries, and the consistency with which it was referred to suggests that this may be a fundamental problem that needs to be addressed in finding solutions to the problems in the Central African Republic. Here — if we may make one simple suggestion — we hope that at the next session of the General Assembly's Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and

Sustainable Development in Africa, the Group will look at the experience of the Central African Republic in this area.

The fourth and final hurdle, of course — and this again was referred to by several delegations — is the continuing unrest in neighbouring countries, particularly the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This point, I think, was made most eloquently by the Foreign Minister of Mauritius, when he said:

> "Indeed, the predicament of the Central African Republic cannot be dissociated from the dire conditions prevailing in the Great Lakes region."

In this regard, I hope that when Mr. Sy returns to Bangui, he will carry a message, from our delegation at least, to Mr. Amara Essy, telling him that we fully support the work he is doing to bring about peace and stability in the Central African Republic and in the region.

Finally, in conclusion, it is clear that in overcoming the hurdles I have mentioned, we need to establish a clear finishing line. The objectives we need to work for need to be understood by all of us, and we hope that the presidential statement we will adopt at the next meeting will be helpful in that direction.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to Mr. Sy to respond to comments and questions raised in this morning's discussions.

Mr. Sy (*spoke in French*): I do not think that I have a great deal to say following the very detailed and relevant statements made by the various members of the Council and their guests. I would merely like to underscore — as you yourself did very aptly, Mr. President — that this is a critical peace-building phase in a subregional context characterized by a high level of tension.

Even if solutions were to be found to the domestic problems of the Central African Republic, this might not be enough to guarantee peace and stability in that country. A comprehensive approach must therefore be considered. In this connection, Minister Amara Essy's mission and the very relevant conclusions he has reached could help us to consolidate the necessary components of a subregional solution.

As concerns the internal problems of the Central African Republic, I think that today we can say that headway is being made. There has been progress in terms of the promotion and respect of human rights, and the partners are beginning to understand the scope of the crisis and realizing that they have to be more flexible in their interventions. I am thinking in particular of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, but also of the Central African Republic's bilateral partners. I think that there are grounds for hope.

I will leave this meeting with a degree of optimism based in part on the very insightful statements made by the members. I was very struck also by the attentiveness with which they read the Secretary-General's report, by the relevance of their comments and by the richness of their contributions.

I thank the Council for its support, and I hope that we in the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) will continue to enjoy the confidence of the Secretary-General and the Security Council.

The President: I thank Mr. Sy for the clarifications he has provided.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council will continue its consideration of this item at a meeting to be held immediately following the adjournment of this meeting. I would therefore like to urge members of the Council to remain seated as we move immediately to adopt the presidential statement.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.4261/Corr.1

Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4261st meeting

Tuesday, 23 January 2001, 10 a.m.
New York

Corrigendum

Throughout the document

The correct title for the Minister from the Central African Republic is:

Minister for the Promotion of Civic Culture in charge of Relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic

For Mr. Mezode *or* Minister Mezode *read* Mr. Agba *or* Minister Agba

01-23867 (E)

United Nations S/PV.4262

Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4262nd meeting

Tuesday, 23 January 2001, 1.10 p.m.

New York

President:	Mahbubani	(Singapore)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Amin
	China	Mr. Wang Donghua
	Colombia	Mr. Franco
	France	Mr. Doutriaux
	Ireland	Ms. Cullinane
	Jamaica	Mr. Ward
	Mali	Mr. Konfourou
	Mauritius	Mr. Neewoor
	Norway	Mr. Strommen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Mustapha
	Ukraine	Ms. Filipenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Harrison
	United States of America	Mr. Minton

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (S/2001/35).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

01-22348 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 1.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (S/2001/35)

The President: The Security Council will now continue its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General dated 11 January 2001 (S/2001/35), submitted in accordance with the statement by the President of the Council of 10 February 2000 (S/PRST/2000/5).

"The Security Council commends the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) and the Representative of the Secretary-General for the efforts they have constantly made to contribute to peace and stability in the Central African Republic. In this connection, the Council welcomes the additional progress made in certain areas since the previous report of the Secretary-General of 29 June 2000 (S/2000/639), particularly in the area of disarmament and the restructuring of the security and defence forces, and as regards respect for human rights by the police.

"The Security Council welcomes the mission to the region of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to assess the impact of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Central African Republic and the Republic of the Congo, in particular its humanitarian, economic, social and security implications. The Council is looking forward to discussing the findings of that mission in the very near future.

"The Security Council expresses its concern at the political and social tensions which have recently resurfaced in the Central African Republic, which threaten the national reconciliation process undertaken four years ago with the active support of the international community. The Council notes with concern the absence of dialogue between the Government and the opposition. The Council is also disturbed by the deterioration of the economic situation, partly because of the repercussions of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the resulting fuel crisis.

"The Security Council welcomes the contributions already received and calls upon bilateral and multilateral donors to provide full support to the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic. The Council appreciates the release by the World Bank of the second tranche of credit for the consolidation of public finances and welcomes the recent decision by the International Monetary Fund to release additional funds. The Council calls upon Member States which made pledges at the special meeting in New York co-chaired by the Secretariat, Germany and the United Nations Development Programme in May 2000, to fulfil their commitments. The Council also stresses the importance of international assistance to refugees and displaced persons in the Central African Republic and in the other countries of the region in order to contribute to regional stability.

"The Council reaffirms that it is first up to the Central Africans to summon the necessary political will for national reconciliation. The Council strongly encourages the Government of the Central African Republic to do everything in its power to strengthen democratic institutions and broaden the scope of national reconciliation. The Council urges all political actors in the Central African Republic to contribute each in their own way to the reduction of the existing tension between the Government and the Opposition. In this respect, while it welcomes the release, on 8 January 2001, of 62 persons who had been arrested during the prohibited demonstration of 19 December 2000, the Council

nevertheless notes with concern certain constraints on peaceful public assembly of opposition and labour groups.

"The Security Council calls upon the Government of the Central African Republic to take concrete measures to implement economic reforms and to ease social tensions. The Council stresses the priority need for the payment of salary arrears in the civil service and welcomes the recent announcement by the Government of the Central African Republic that it will take steps in this direction. The Council also encourages the Government of the Central African Republic to take all the financial measures that are necessary to relaunch the demobilization and reintegration programme.

"The Council requests the Secretary-General to continue to keep it regularly informed about the activities of BONUCA, the situation in the Central African Republic, and in particular the progress made in the political, economic and social reforms, and to submit a report by 30 June 2001, in accordance with the statement of the President of the Council dated 10 February 2000."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2001/2.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.4263

Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4263rd meeting

Tuesday, 23 January 2001, 6.05 p.m.
New York

President:	Mahbubani	(Singapore)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Amin
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Doutriaux
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Mali	Mr. Ouane
	Mauritius	Mr. Neewoor
	Norway	Mr. Strommen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Mustapha
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchynski
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Grainger
	United States of America	Mr. Hume

Agenda

The situation in Angola

Note by the President of the Security Council (S/2000/1225).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

01-22392 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 6.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Angola

Note by the President of the Security Council
(S/2000/1225)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the note dated 21 December 2000 by the President of the Security Council, enclosing a letter dated 21 December 2000 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 864 (1993) concerning the situation in Angola, transmitting the final report of the Monitoring Mechanism on Angola Sanctions established by resolution 1295 (2000), document S/2000/1225.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/2001/69, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations. It is my understanding that the Security Council is ready to vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bangladesh, China, Colombia, France, Ireland, Jamaica, Mali, Mauritius, Norway, Russian Federation, Singapore, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1336 (2001).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.4264

Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4264th meeting

Thursday, 25 January 2001, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Mahbubani	(Singapore)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Ahmed
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Jamaica	Mr. Ward
	Mali*	Mr. Ouane
	Mauritius	Mr. Neewoor
	Norway	Mr. Strømmen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Mustapha
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchynski
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Note by the President of the Security Council (S/2000/1195).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

01-22675 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

Note by the President of the Security Council (S/2000/1195)

The President: I would first like to make a procedural announcement. I would like to inform the members of the Council and others in the Chamber that I plan to carry on with this morning's meeting until about 1 p.m. We will suspend the meeting at about 1 p.m. and resume promptly at 3 p.m. to hear the remaining speakers. I thought it would be useful for members to know this as they plan the day ahead.

I would now like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Belgium, Burkina Faso, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sweden, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Kamara (Sierra Leone) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Adam (Belgium), Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso), Mr. Duval (Canada), Mr. Bouah-Kamon (Côte d'Ivoire), Mr. Jagne (Gambia), Mr. Camara (Guinea), Mr. Captan (Liberia) and Mr. Schori (Sweden) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation, under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure, to Mr. Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997) concerning Sierra Leone.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Ambassador Chowdhury to take a seat at the Council table.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation to the Permanent Observer of Switzerland to the United Nations to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the note of the President of the Security Council enclosing a letter dated 19 December 2000 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997) concerning Sierra Leone transmitting the report of the Panel of Experts established by resolution 1306 (2000), document S/2000/1195.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to the following documents: S/2000/1232, note by the President of the Security Council, enclosing a letter dated 21 December 2000 from the Permanent Observer of Switzerland to the President of the Security Council; S/2001/8 and S/2001/74, letters dated 28 December 2000 and 23 January 2001, respectively, from the Gambia to the President of the Security Council; S/2001/6, letter dated 3 January 2001 from Liberia to the President of the Security Council; and S/2001/78, letter dated 24 January 2001 from Liberia to the Secretary-General.

I shall now give the floor to Mr. Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997) concerning Sierra Leone.

Mr. Chowdhury: I am happy that, finally, the report of the Panel of Experts appointed by the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1306 (2000), in relation to Sierra Leone, is being presented at this open meeting of the Council.

I thank you, Mr. President, for setting aside a full day for this meeting, despite the heavy schedule of the Council as the month of January draws to a close. This will allow for comments on the report by all interested countries, which I am sure will take us forward in the full implementation of the measures imposed by the Security Council concerning the situation in Sierra Leone.

Today's meeting is of much significance, as this is the second time that the Council has considered the report of a panel consisting of independent experts. The recent trend in the Council to recommend the appointment of panels of experts to take an in-depth look into subjects about which the Council has inadequate or very little information has been a welcome and useful practice.

The present Panel was appointed by the Secretary-General on 2 August 2000, for an initial period of four months from its effective entry into operation, to collect information on the possible violations of the measures imposed by Council resolution 1171 (1998) and the link between the trade in diamonds and the trade in arms, as well as to consider the inadequacy of air traffic control systems in the region. The Panel commenced its work on 21 August and submitted its report to me on 14 December last year.

The five members of the Panel, Ambassador Martin Chungong Ayafor, who acted as the Chairman of the Panel, Mr. Ian Smillie, Mr. Johan Peleman, Mr. Harjit Sandhu, and Mr. Atabou Bodian, are here with me today here at the Security Council table. They represent expertise encompassing the fields outlined in the mandate of Council resolution 1306 (2000). This broad array of expertise has been of immense value in the discharge of the task given to the Panel. I would like to express my appreciation to each one of them for the dedication and thorough professionalism with which they conducted their work as Panel members within the given time.

I am happy to note that the Panel has been very careful with the information it used to substantiate its findings. On page 15 of the report, the standards of verification in the investigations carried out by the Panel are elaborated. The Panel required at least two credible direct sources of information on an issue before its inclusion in the report as a finding of the Panel. Where only one source was available but the information was thought to be credible and relevant, the source has been indicated in the report.

The Panel took this approach because the issues under investigation needed to be looked at carefully and objectively. It examined how and why Sierra Leone's conflict diamonds are able to find their way into the legitimate diamond trade with relative ease. It examined how weapons reach the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone, in spite of United Nations arms embargoes being in place. It examined the adequacy of the air traffic control system in the West African region and made recommendations on ways to improve them. As a result of its investigations, the Panel has come up with a number of findings. These were presented, along with the observations and recommendations of the Panel in its report, in accordance with Council resolution 1306 (2000), and can be found in document S/2000/1195.

Following submission, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997) considered the report and forwarded it to the Security Council on 19 December. The Council subsequently decided to have this meeting today, 25 January, after the Committee had considered the report further at its meeting on 10 January.

After its first meeting, in August last year, the Panel, in its four months of work, travelled widely, meeting Government officials, law enforcement agencies, United Nations agency representatives, journalists and members of civil society organizations, as well as individuals and companies in the private sector. It examined a large amount of documentation and statistical data. Together, singly or in groups, Panel members visited 21 countries in connection with their assignment, including the relevant countries in West Africa, as well as all major diamond trading and polishing centres. Generally, the Panel members received cooperation and support from the Governments concerned and the private sector.

The report details the findings of the Panel of Experts on the three major areas. As regards diamonds, the Panel collected information contained in part I of the report, on the illegal exploitation of Sierra Leone diamonds and its new diamond certification system. It also collected information on international diamond statistics and transit countries. Based on its findings, the Panel has made specific recommendations. I draw the Security Council's attention to the

recommendations contained in paragraphs 155 through 166 in this regard.

As contained in part II of the report, the Panel collected information on weapons and related *matériel*, transport and air traffic control in the West Africa region. Based on the information it collected, the Panel arrived at certain conclusions on these areas, which are contained in paragraphs 252 through 254. The Panel also made specific recommendations in this regard. I would draw the Security Council's attention to those recommendations, which are contained in paragraphs 255 through 269 of the report.

In part III of the report, a technical analysis of air traffic control systems in West Africa has been included, and ways of improving the system have been identified. Recommendations stemming from the analysis have been consolidated in paragraph 269 of the report.

In addition to these recommendations on three specific areas, the Panel has offered some concluding recommendations, contained in paragraphs 271 through 273 of the report.

The Panel was not able to investigate in detail some of the information that came to its attention later in the course of its work. A number of such outstanding matters have been mentioned in the report, in particular in paragraphs 246 through 251.

In adopting resolution 1306 (2000), in paragraph 20 the Council expressed its readiness to consider appropriate action on the basis of the report under consideration. In its report, the Panel has made specific recommendations, as well as recommendations of a broader nature. Some of the recommendations are procedural in nature, while some recommendations on systemic issues have been made for tightening implementation of the measures in a broader context.

Apart from the Security Council's proactive role, international cooperation and solidarity are needed to realize many of the recommendations. In particular, the development of a better regulatory framework for the air traffic control systems in the region cannot be done without such cooperation, and both technical and financial assistance are required. I make this point to underscore that a comprehensive approach is needed to address the situation in Sierra Leone, an approach that will also involve actors other than the Council itself.

Follow-up actions on the recommendations is a very important area that the Security Council must emphasize. I believe that the Council can adopt various approaches in considering the recommendations and determining follow-up actions. All the recommendations contained in the Panel's report should get full, due and thorough consideration. The effort and resources dedicated to this exercise should not be wasted. The report must not get a proverbial place on some shelf gathering dust.

I would like to conclude this presentation by highlighting a passage in which the Panel, during its visit to Sierra Leone, was reminded of the background of its mandate and of the human dimension of the tragedy of the people of Sierra Leone. There, thousands of civilians — many of them children — victims of unspeakable brutality, face an uncertain future. Tens of thousands of Sierra Leoneans have lost their lives. Half a million have become refugees, and three or four times that number have been displaced.

As we meet today, much of Sierra Leone remains in rebel hands, and people there live without access to basic amenities of life — medical assistance, education or the means to a secure a livelihood. The Panel and the sanctions Committee, which I chair, remain cognizant of this vital dimension of the problem and believe that the formal presentation of the report today will spur adequate action by the Security Council to help end the suffering of the people of Sierra Leone and this decade-long tragedy.

Mr. Eldon (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President, for arranging this meeting today, and thanks also to Ambassador Chowdhury for the impressive introduction that he has just given to our debate. It is a particular pleasure to see the members of the Panel of Experts sitting behind him today.

The report of the Panel is welcome and thorough. Its members have worked hard and methodically over the past few months to produce a document that pulls no punches. Their findings on continuing violations of the United Nations arms and diamond embargoes on Sierra Leone are disturbing in the extreme.

We strongly welcome the Panel's endorsement of the concept of a global certification scheme for rough diamonds. In this context, let me emphasize our strong support for last year's General Assembly resolution 55/56, on conflict diamonds, which the United Kingdom co-sponsored, and our commitment to

participating fully in international efforts to take this important work forward as a matter of priority. We want to see a simple, workable international framework in place at an early date. The aim of this framework should be to protect the legitimate diamond trade and enhance its reputation, while dealing a death blow to the illicit diamond trade.

We support the Panel's recommendation that the Government of Sierra Leone should act to enhance the credibility of its certification regime. The steps necessary include auditing dealers, developing support systems to bring small artisanal miners into the formal diamond industry and developing transparent methods of ensuring that diamond profits are used to benefit the people of Sierra Leone.

The United Kingdom would like to see a greatly enhanced capacity within the United Nations Secretariat for supporting the Council and the sanctions Committees on all aspects of sanctions, including their design, implementation, monitoring and enforcement. This could include action to profile the arms brokers and intermediaries responsible for supplying weapons to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). We hope that the informal working group on sanctions will make recommendations to this effect.

On the role of arms-exporting countries, the United Kingdom urges all Member States exporting arms to make thorough checks on the proposed end use of arms exports at the time of licensing. These checks should include querying suspect end-user certificates with the countries concerned and circulating details of false end-user certificates to other countries for information. We support the Panel's recommendation for closer cooperation between the Security Council and the World Customs Organization.

The Panel's report usefully identifies a number of individuals and companies involved in sanctions violations and a number of countries from whose territory such violations are taking place. The United Kingdom will look very seriously at any hint that United Kingdom citizens and companies might be involved in violating sanctions and will investigate fully where necessary. We urge other States to do the same and to ensure that violation of United Nations sanctions is a criminal offence in their domestic legislation.

We are alarmed at the malign role played by individuals such as Victor Bout in the illicit arms supply chain. We call on the Governments of all Member States to ensure that their territory is not being used as a base of operations for such people. There should be no sanctuary for sanctions busters.

We note with particular concern the Panel's conclusion that Liberian President Charles Taylor is actively involved in fuelling the violence in Sierra Leone through both financial and military support. The Panel has also found that the bulk of RUF diamonds are smuggled out of Sierra Leone through Liberia and that Liberian-registered aircraft are being used for illicit arms deliveries.

In the light of these findings, there can no longer be a shadow of a doubt that President Taylor has callously been prolonging the conflict in Sierra Leone for personal gain. As a result, tens of thousands of innocents have been killed or maimed. This cannot be allowed to continue. The United Kingdom welcomes recent statements by President Taylor announcing his intention of halting support for the RUF and of acting on certain of the Panel's recommendations. But these overtures to the international community are, frankly, too little too late. In the meantime, we hear increasing reports of Liberian support for recent attacks by the rebel movement in Guinea, which have left hundreds dead. Liberian actions are threatening the stability of the entire region. It is high time for the Security Council to act.

The United States and the United Kingdom are therefore co-sponsoring a draft resolution now under negotiation in the Security Council which would impose, under Chapter VII of the Charter, a range of measures on Liberia designed to put effective pressure on President Taylor and his associates to change their ways. These measures have been carefully crafted to have minimal consequences for ordinary Liberians, while making Liberian support for the RUF more difficult. They include a ban on Liberian rough diamonds, a ban on flights by Liberian registered aircraft, a new arms embargo, a selective travel ban on senior Liberian officials and a ban on the import of Liberian timber. We hope that those present in this Chamber will recognize the reasons why it is imperative that the Security Council should impose these measures as quickly as possible. The draft resolution makes clear that sanctions will be lifted as soon as the Council sees an end to Liberian financial and military support for the RUF in Sierra Leone and

for armed rebel movements in other neighbouring countries.

Ultimately, it is for President Taylor to recognize that he can no longer hide behind statements of innocence. The quicker he realizes this and shows a commitment to the well-being of the Liberian people and regional peace, the sooner Liberia can be brought back into the international fold.

The Panel deserves our warmest congratulations for a very thorough piece of work, but there is much still to do. We believe that its mandate should be extended for a further period to enable it to make further investigations into support for armed rebel groups in this region and to continue to turn the international spotlight on the dark world of sanctions busting. We hope that the current team will be willing to devote more time to this extremely important task.

Mr. Ward (Jamaica): My delegation wishes at the outset to thank Ambassador Chowdhury for the major efforts that he has expended in bringing this report to the Council. We also wish to thank the Panel for having provided us with a comprehensive, meaningful report.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Panel established by Security Council resolution 1306 (2000), aimed at determining the link between illegal exploitation of resources and the perpetuation of the conflict in Sierra Leone. We believe that it is a timely reminder to the Council that sanctions regimes which it adopts require constant monitoring and adjustments to ensure their successful observance and efficacy. Indeed, my delegation believes that it is naïve to think that sanctions committees meeting in the basement of the United Nations Secretariat in New York can effectively monitor sanctions half a world away.

Accordingly, we urge that serious consideration be given to the recommendation of the Panel that the Security Council establish an ongoing capacity to monitor the implementation of sanctions as well as to study their unintended effects on third parties and individuals. In that regard, the work of the Committee on sanctions will give full consideration to this issue.

The Angola-UNITA monitoring mechanism was a good and a useful innovation. It is now possible to state categorically that the sanctions against UNITA are succeeding in degrading the capacity of UNITA to continue its military campaign. That monitoring mechanism provides a good example of what can be done when sanctions are effectively monitored.

As the report of the Panel informs us, violations of the sanctions regime are widespread and occur with impunity. Already, the work of the Panel of Experts has borne fruit as Governments and other entities have begun to focus on what can be done to improve the enforcement of sanctions and to curtail existing violations.

Those who have aided in violating sanctions are equally culpable for the humanitarian tragedy still unfolding in Sierra Leone and pressure must be brought to bear by the international community to ensure compliance with Council resolutions. My delegation is disturbed by the frequency with which the Panel, in all aspects of sanctions violations, implicated some of Sierra Leone's neighbours.

My delegation pays tribute to the nations of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which by their actions have demonstrated that the true measure of neighbourliness is that nations care enough to take positive action to lift other nations out of cycles of violence, rather than profiteering from the misery of others. By seeking to return stability in the political and security spheres to the region, the nations of ECOWAS are paving the way for other aspects of development to occur.

The imposition of measures to redress sanctions violations will not be taken lightly by the Council, and my delegation believes that whatever punitive measures are adopted by the Council must have minimum collateral effect on unintended targets and must be precisely aimed at those who have been unambiguously implicated in sanctions violations; a broad-brush approach will have little support from my delegation.

In this regard, my delegation is very supportive of the recommendation to better regulate the flow of rough diamonds from producing countries. It is unacceptable that countries with small amounts of proven exports of rough diamonds can be allowed to circumvent sanctions by laundering illegal exports through their territory. All diamond-exporting countries in West Africa should be encouraged to adopt as a matter of urgency a certification system similar to that adopted by Sierra Leone. These countries should be given the opportunity to implement a system which

will not hinder their own legitimate exports but will prevent the profits from perpetuating the conflict.

We are equally concerned about the ease with which small arms are supplied to the region. The responsibility for the proliferation of weapons into West Africa lies with the producing countries, as well as with those that trans-ship them. The ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa is a good and useful mechanism upon which we can build. The Council — and, indeed, the international community — must assist the ECOWAS countries to initiate a common system of controls that includes the recording, licensing, collection and destruction of small weapons.

The Panel also recommends that strict controls on airspace in West Africa be effected in order to curb the movement of both illicit rough diamonds and small weapons. This will necessarily involve the installation of new monitoring and surveillance equipment. The countries of the region will need international assistance to acquire and maintain such a monitoring system, and we urge expeditious assistance in this regard.

The measures recommended by the Panel will be effective only if all Member States adhere to the terms of the sanctions resolutions. We owe it to the people of Sierra Leone to ensure that the riches of their country are used for the development of the country and not to perpetuate war.

My delegation will give careful consideration to the recommendations made by the Panel, in particular those that the Chairman of the Committee has highlighted in his introduction of the report. As he stated so emphatically, the Panel's work should not be wasted or be allowed to gather dust. The greatest tribute to the Panel's work will be to ensure that the Security Council acts decisively on its recommendations.

Mr. Levitte (France) *(spoke in French)*: I would like to thank Ambassador Chowdhury for presenting the report of the Panel of Experts, and I congratulate the members of the Panel of Experts, who are sitting behind him here in the Chamber.

First of all, I would like to say that my delegation associates itself fully with the statement to be made by the Ambassador of Sweden later in this debate on behalf of the European Union.

We are pleased that the report of the Panel of Experts set up by resolution 1306 (2000) to study the question of the trade in diamonds and arms in connection with Sierra Leone is today being taken up at an open debate of the Security Council. For us, it is a fundamental point of principle that reports that in one way or another implicate States should be dealt with in a two-way debate that is transparent and open to all. This is also an important opportunity for members of the Security Council and all Members of our Organization to enter into a dialogue in which all can participate and give their views.

Before turning to the content of some of the recommendations made by the Panel of Experts, I would like to tell Council members that France greatly appreciates the content of this report. The work that has been done by the Experts is serious and comprehensive. The information seems to us better supported than that of some reports presented last year. The report demonstrates clearly that there is a complex and confusing network of support for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Above and beyond the responsibility of Liberia, which we all hope will change its errant ways of the past, we should all give thought — and this includes members of the Security Council, members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and of African subregional organizations, countries that buy diamonds and countries that sell weapons — to how to put a stop to the organized criminals who profit from and take advantage of the Sierra Leonean conflict and, unfortunately, other conflicts in Africa.

These criminals often act, as can be seen clearly from the report, without the knowledge of the competent national authorities, who, because of lack of resources or lack of political will, are not able to control what they do.

The same names crop up time and again in one report after another. I shall mention only one name — Victor Bout — who supposedly has a fleet of over 50 aircraft and who has been implicated in many illegal trafficking operations throughout Africa, supporting the most reprehensible movements, such as RUF and UNITA.

It is high time the international community acted as one and put an end to this kind of activity. All countries must cooperate to this end.

France particularly welcomes two general recommendations in the report. It is our deepest hope that specific follow-up action will be taken on them. The first deals with broadening the certification regime for Sierra Leonean diamonds. The Experts hope that this regime can serve as a model in the framework of the so-called Kimberley process. We support that idea. We also support the idea of gradually extending the Sierra Leonean certification regime to all neighbouring countries and to the subregion.

The second recommendation aims at better monitoring of exports of small arms by producing countries. Strengthening customs controls, with appropriate support from the international community, is a priority in this regard.

Much of the report is devoted to the role Liberian authorities are playing in the conflict in Sierra Leone and the ongoing support they have been giving to the rebel movement: providing it with weapons, buying its diamonds and giving refuge to some of its officials. We would like to think that the publication of this report, the awareness of the situation on the part of the international community and the ensuing damage done to Liberia would lead the Liberian Government to revise its policy drastically. However, too many promises have been made in the past for us to be content with nice words. Thus France supports the principle of establishing an effective sanctions regime against the Liberian leaders. We are not here advocating a punitive approach, but rather a motivational system that would complement the steps that are to be taken at the national level. France was particularly encouraged by the recent decision by Liberia to expel from Monrovia all the leaders of the RUF living there.

Beyond Liberia, the settlement of this crisis in West Africa will also require the good will of all the neighbouring countries and a desire to move towards regional peace, rather than futilely pouring oil on the flames.

In our view, in order to have a positive impact the sanctions regime to be adopted by the Security Council must respect the following principles.

First, the sanctions proposed must be for a limited time. This does not mean going along in any way with the reprehensible machinations of the Liberian authorities; it is simply a question of making sure that the Security Council will be able to review the whole issue in depth and on a regular basis — including, if necessary, evaluating at the appropriate time the extension of these sanctions.

Secondly, the sanctions proposed must in no way penalize or affect the Liberian people, who are among the poorest in the world. The sanctions proposed must be linked to the conflict in Sierra Leone and Liberia's involvement in it.

Thirdly, the sanctions proposed must be motivational and be linked to precise criteria for their lifting. The Liberian authorities must understand well what they have to do to get the sanctions to which they are subject lifted.

Fourthly, the proposed sanctions must not interfere with the possible development of a solution that may be negotiated with the help of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The sanctions must be an element in an overall political settlement, and not a replacement for such a settlement. The views of ECOWAS — a body that is directly involved in dealing with this crisis — must be heard and respected by the Security Council.

Fifthly, France advocates an incremental approach to the implementation of sanctions, so as to allow the democratically elected Government of Liberia to shoulder its responsibilities.

By continuing to support the RUF, the Liberian leaders would be assuming a heavy responsibility for increasingly isolating their country from the international community, thus hobbling its chances for development. We would urge these leaders not to make this choice, but rather to cooperate fully, with a view of establishing a lasting regional peace.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) (*spoke in French*): At the outset I would like to thank you, Sir, for having convened this meeting of the Security Council so that Ambassador Chowdhury, the Chairman of the Security Council Committee for Sierra Leone, could introduce to us the report of the Panel of Experts set up pursuant to paragraph 19 of section B of Council resolution 1306 (2000) on Sierra Leone. We thank Ambassador Chowdhury for his introductory remarks, and we

welcome here the members of the Panel of Experts who are here today.

The report before the Council contains information and recommendations regarding many countries of West Africa, in addition to Sierra Leone. In this regard, we welcome the convening, in the next few days, of another meeting between the Security Council and an important delegation from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali. This meeting, which is a carry-over of the meeting of 21 June 2000, will be broader and more in depth. I will therefore confine myself here to a few preliminary comments.

First, ECOWAS is greatly concern about the conflicts ripping apart the subregion of West Africa, in particular because of the continuation of the conflict in Sierra Leone. Confronted with this situation, in 1998 ECOWAS adopted a moratorium on the import and export of light weapons in West Africa. Also, in a more limited fashion the twenty-third summit of ECOWAS, held in Abuja in May 2000, called for a regional investigation of trafficking in arms and diamonds. The upcoming meeting of the Security Council with the ECOWAS ministerial delegation will provide a useful opportunity for an update on this investigation.

Secondly, the United Nations and ECOWAS must work together to restore peace in Sierra Leone and the entire West African region. In this connection, we are greatly pleased by the mission of the Security Council to Sierra Leone and the West African region last October, and the subsequent recommendations it made. We also welcome the decision by the Secretary-General to conduct a United Nations inter-agency mission in West Africa, which from 9 to 24 February will visit 10 countries in our region. It is important that the mandate of this mission include assessing the needs and priorities of West Africa for peace and security.

We have great hopes for that mission. Under its terms of reference, it should submit recommendations for and elements of a regional strategy to be implemented by the United Nations or, possibly, by the United Nations in cooperation with ECOWAS, with a view to meeting the needs and dealing with the problems that are identified.

Thirdly, ECOWAS will do everything it can to work with the Security Council, in particular in the search for a solution to the Sierra Leone conflict. The report before the Council is intended to contribute to this goal, and the comments by ECOWAS on this report will be given at the upcoming meeting of the Council with the ECOWAS ministerial delegation.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to express its thanks to you, Sir, for having made this an open debate in which all the Member States might participate. The relationship between diamonds and weapons is a topic of interest to many States, as was shown by the debate held by the recent General Assembly on the role of diamonds in promoting conflicts.

We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, who presides over the sanctions Committee for Sierra Leone, for the admirable determination with which he has led the work of the Committee and for the arrangements he made to bring before us today, here in New York, the Panel of Experts responsible for the report on diamonds and arms in Sierra Leone.

We believe that the work done by the Panel of Experts chaired by Mr. Ayafor merits our thanks and appreciation, given the quality of the work done, the quantity of information collected and the tremendous contribution of their work to the work of the Committee established by the Security Council concerning Sierra Leone. We are pleased that the Experts focused not only on the relationship between the diamond trade and the supply of arms to the rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), but that they also addressed the use of aircraft of varying provenance in the transport of weapons and in violations of sanctions. As a result, we have before us a report whose recommendations are amply substantiated by facts.

With regard to the report's specific recommendations on diamonds, we find it morally repugnant that diamond mines in Sierra Leone should serve as a source of suffering for the people of Sierra Leone while at the same time being a symbol of ostentation and prosperity to other peoples. It is clear that the production of diamonds is important to the economic livelihood of various nations and that Sierra Leone's participation in the world diamond trade is relatively small. But, added to that of other countries in conflict, Sierra Leone's share has taken on considerable dimensions with in the context of international peace and security.

We congratulate the Government of Sierra Leone on having put in place a system to certify diamonds destined for export. We would like to see the expeditious establishment of a global certification system, as called for in General Assembly resolution 55/56. We encourage the World Diamond Council and States participating in the Kimberly process to come to an agreement on this matter as soon as possible.

We deplore that some of the countries mentioned in the report have refused to cooperate with the Panel of Experts by not providing their national diamond export statistics. The Council should urgently encourage those countries to cooperate and to adopt a system of certification similar to Sierra Leone's. Greater controls should also be required of diamond-importing countries. It is necessary to reduce statistical discrepancies, illegal operations and sales of conflict diamonds in the jewellery stores of numerous countries. The customs controls adopted by many of our countries in compliance with the sanctions imposed by the Security Council are our own contribution to bringing about peace in Sierra Leone and to ensuring that its people benefit from their natural resources.

With regard to the report's recommendations on weapons, we must find effective ways to reduce weapon inflows in regions such as West Africa, where countries have imposed a Moratorium on the import of small arms. As the report indicates, responsibility for the flow of arms lies with producing countries, countries that trans-ship weapons and countries using weapons. We believe it is the Council's duty to strengthen international measures to limit weapon flows into West Africa. Weapon-producing countries bear special responsibility and should be the first to monitor transactions destined for conflict areas, areas under moratorium and areas under Security Council embargoes. Companies that manufacture weapons should not hide behind the excuse that they are not responsible because they license foreign companies to produce arms and do not themselves produce any directly. Like many companies that produce weapons, an international trafficker such as Victor Bout, who is mentioned in the report, supported by lax weapon-export regimes, can become a genuine threat to international peace and security.

Another aspect of the arms situation is the high number of child soldiers in the conflict in Sierra Leone. This is closely related to the fact that they are able to use the increasingly light weapons issued to them.

Turning to the report's recommendations on air traffic, I would like to recognize the difficulties encountered by airport authorities in West African countries in relation to controlling the operations of aircraft used to transport weapons in the region. We believe that the Council should indeed insist on a more transparent registry of ships and aircraft in countries dispensing flags of convenience. As the Panel of Experts suggests, the International Civil Aviation Administration should also be more actively involved in technical cooperation activities aimed at equipping the region's airports and should even consider deploying flight supervisors to critical areas.

With regard to the report's recommendations concerning Liberia, I wish to say that the Panel of Experts has given us many signs of the involvement of that country's Government in the sale of diamonds and weapons to rebels in Sierra Leone, including in association with companies carrying out illicit operations. We are deeply concerned that even the natural resources of Liberia's forests have been compromised in order to fuel these operations. We regret that time constraints prevented the Experts from describing in greater detail how Sierra Leone's diamonds are exported through Liberia.

We are encouraged by the decision of the Government of Liberia to participate in this debate through the presence of its Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Government of Liberia must be aware that the Security Council requires the cooperation of West African countries to promote peace and security in the region, including in Sierra Leone. The Council is prepared to respond vigorously to any violation of the sanctions applied against the members of the RUF.

With regard to the monitoring of sanctions, my delegation was discouraged to read the Panel of Experts' observation in paragraph 47 of their report that Security Council resolutions on diamonds and weapons are violated with impunity. We believe it is necessary to continue to deny the enemies of peace in Sierra Leone access to arms and diamond markets. We look forward to the upcoming opportunity to hold a dialogue with the member States of the Economic Community of West African States on this situation here in New York.

In conclusion, we believe that, beyond a regime of sanctions applicable to a single country or to a group of rebels within a country, we must strengthen the

capacity of the United Nations Secretariat to carry out ongoing monitoring of sanctions and embargoes imposed by the Security Council in fulfilling its mission of safeguarding international peace and security.

Mr. Ben Mustapha (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I should like first of all to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this meeting, which will, I am sure, enable us to have a constructive exchange of views on the important issue under consideration today. I should also like to express my great appreciation to Ambassador Chowdhury for his considerable work in guiding the sanctions Committee concerning Sierra Leone.

My delegation joins previous speakers in thanking the Panel of Experts, established pursuant to resolution 1306 (2000) to study the issue of the trade in diamonds and arms in connection with Sierra Leone, for its report.

I should also like to pay tribute to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for its initiative to investigate the illicit trade in and exploitation of diamonds from Sierra Leone. The outcome of the investigation undertaken by ECOWAS — which, we must remember, is in the best position to identify the various aspects of this complex problem and to suggest the most appropriate measures to take in keeping with the specific context of the subregion — should be duly taken into consideration by the Security Council.

Having carefully considered the report of the Panel of Experts before us today, my delegation would like to make several observations and comments. First, we believe that understanding the problem of the illicit trade in diamonds requires a comprehensive and expert approach encompassing, in a verifiable manner, the entire chain of actors involved. We believe, therefore, that in order to be truly effective and fair, it is not enough to analyse merely the individual links in the chain, but, rather, the chain as a whole.

Such an approach should aim to tighten control over the product itself — the diamonds — through concerted and coordinated international action. In this connection, we support the recommendations of the Panel of Experts concerning the need to set up a generalized system of certification and to create a mechanism within the United Nations Secretariat which could continuously monitor the implementation of the sanctions and embargoes imposed by the Council.

Secondly, with regard to the trade in arms, the approach necessary to control the flow of weapons in conflict areas should not be selective. We share the opinion of the Panel of Experts that responsibility for the massive flood of weapons into West Africa lies with producing countries as well as those that transship and use them. I should like in this connection to underscore my delegation's support for the recommendation of the Government of Burkina Faso, which has been endorsed by the Panel of Experts, that the Security Council supervise a mechanism to monitor all weapons imports into the territory of Burkina Faso and the use of such weapons for a period of three years.

Thirdly, the approach that the Security Council should take with regard to the problem of the illicit trade in diamonds and arms in connection with Sierra Leone should be preventive and progressive in nature, based on dialogue and a clear and agreed strategy capable of producing concrete and rapid results while avoiding, insofar as possible, adding to the suffering of the civilian population, which is already exhausted from other humanitarian, social and economic problems. Furthermore, the measures to be taken by the Council should involve only the target concern: the illegal trade in diamonds and arms. Extending sanctions to other areas and activities might cause new difficulties, in particular for the people in the countries concerned, who are already suffering from the impact of armed conflicts in the region. Any sanctions imposed by the Security Council should be tailored to specific objectives; they should have a time limit and contain automatic provisions for their lifting.

In conclusion, I should like to underscore the importance for the Security Council of paying particular attention to the need to ensure that ECOWAS initiatives are not placed in jeopardy. The success of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) interposition mission along the common borders of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea — which the Council has supported and which should be deployed from 28 February — must be assured, and the Council must accord priority in its deliberations to the follow-up to certain recommendations of the Panel of Experts.

In this connection, we welcome the decision taken by the ECOWAS Ministers for Foreign Affairs to visit New York in the near future in order to meet with

the members of the Security Council. We are convinced that their visit will provide an opportunity for a fruitful exchange of views between the members of the Council and the ECOWAS delegation, led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, on the various aspects of the situation prevailing in the region. We believe also that the visit will lead to the consolidation of the comprehensive and multidimensional approach established by the Council to manage this situation in order to lay the groundwork for lasting peace and stability, not only in Sierra Leone, but in the entire subregion of West Africa.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): First of all, I should like to thank the Panel of Experts concerning Sierra Leone for its report and Ambassador Chowdhury, the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997), for introducing it.

The Chinese delegation has carefully studied the Panel's report and believes that it is comprehensive and is helpful in our further understanding the links between the illegal diamond trade and armed conflict, as well as in assessing the implementation by the countries concerned of Security Council resolutions. The report contains many concrete recommendations, some of which are quite inspiring. We should like to express our appreciation to the Panel for the tireless efforts it has made under the leadership of Ambassador Chowdhury.

We have learned from the report that serious violations of Security Council resolutions are taking place in the region at present. The illegal diamond trade still stands out as a problem, and it has become an important source of income for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in maintaining and promoting its military ambitions. Furthermore, small arms are everywhere and are easily available to both rebels and criminal elements. We also learned that some countries are directly participating in the trade or are allowing their territories to be used in the providing of arms to Sierra Leone. This situation is one of the most significant reasons why the peace process in Sierra Leone is at such a difficult stage, unable to make progress.

Today, long after the Security Council resolutions were adopted, the fact that the situation remains unresolved is indeed a source of concern and a point worthy of our consideration. We believe that the most urgent task before us is to take concrete measures to effectively curb the illegal diamond trade and the illicit flows of and trafficking in arms so as to reduce the negative effect of these two phenomena on peace in Sierra Leone.

On one hand, the Security Council and the international community need to work harder for peace and to urge the parties in Sierra Leone to effectively implement the agreements already reached. On the other hand, it is necessary to take decisive measures to cut off outside support for the RUF so that it will not entertain any illusions of expanding spheres of influence by military means. In this regard, all countries need to cooperate and coordinate. Many good recommendations have been put forward by the Panel in this regard, and we need to consider and implement them. We also believe, however, that any sanctions imposed will have to be well targeted. We must fully consider and avoid all possible negative humanitarian effects resulting from sanctions. The sanctions must also have a time limit.

The conflict in Sierra Leone has a direct bearing on the stability of neighbouring countries, as well as on peace and security in the region. We must have a comprehensive approach. This problem needs to be considered and approached in a regional context. Sanctions are not the only means available, and are certainly not the best means.

The Security Council must play an important role in seeking a comprehensive settlement. In the interest of regional peace and stability, we urge the countries concerned to abide strictly by Security Council resolutions so as to promote an early and peaceful resolution of the issue.

We also appreciate the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in trying to stabilize the regional situation, and we welcome its continued role in this regard. We also look forward to the ECOWAS briefing to be made in a few days. We hope that the Security Council will strengthen its close cooperation with ECOWAS in this regard in order to promote the peace process in the region.

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We join in thanking Ambassador Chowdhury for introducing the report of the Panel of Experts, and I take this opportunity to express our great appreciation for the work he is doing as Chairman of the sanctions Committee concerning Sierra Leone.

The Russian delegation notes the considerable progress made in implementing the provisions of Security Council resolution 1306 (2000), on prohibiting the import from Sierra Leone of all diamonds except those having a certificate of origin issued by the Government of that country. The launching of the national certification system provided for in resolution 1306 (2000) has not only made it possible to resume diamond exports from Sierra Leone; it has also made possible an almost threefold increase in the volume of rough diamonds exported through official channels. Much remains to be done in order to enhance the effectiveness of the sanctions regime. Moreover, time will be needed for these measures to have an impact on the ability of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to continue the armed conflict.

The report of the Panel of Experts on sanctions against Sierra Leone contains much useful, detailed information, and it should be helpful. The Experts have done a lot of useful work, compiling an unprecedented volume of material.

At the same time, however, we regret that some conclusions and recommendations in the report are too radical in nature and go beyond the mandate of the Panel as decided by the Security Council. It is also regrettable that the report contains no fully developed provisions on ways to work with certain States in enhancing the effectiveness of the sanctions regime against Sierra Leone, including within the context of the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

I wish to state that the Russian delegation fully shares the concern about the role being played by the illegal diamond mining in and export of diamonds from Sierra Leone in financing ongoing conflict in that country. In this connection, we think it would be advisable to introduce certification systems for rough diamonds in a number of African countries, as recommended in the report of the Panel of Experts. Moreover, we advocate that the rough diamonds regime be based on national control mechanisms.

At the same time, we have doubts about how realistic this six-month period proposed in the report is for establishing and introducing such certification regimes. The question also arises on how to pay for such a measure, since it is obvious that the States named in the report are hardly likely to be able to do so. Obviously, foreign donors would have to be involved. We find it totally unacceptable that the report attempts to raise the question of establishing what has been called an international certification system for rough diamonds. This question is being discussed in the intergovernmental negotiating process. So far, a broad consensus has not emerged.

The process of resolving the problem of conflict diamonds in Sierra Leone and other conflict areas in Africa must be focused primarily on specific measures to break the linkage between the illicit traffic in rough diamonds and the financing of rebel movements, and it should not involve the interest of legal participants in the international diamond business, which account for over 96 per cent of diamonds on the international markets.

However, the main point is that the Security Council did not authorize the Panel of Experts to get involved in the complex intergovernmental negotiating process, which involves very serious economic and financial interests of States and companies, and they are not always the same interests and views. The Panel is certainly not authorized to recommend to the Security Council to come out in favour of the position of any one of the parties in that dialogue.

Very careful further work and analysis of all the factors involved are necessary with regard to the package of sanctions against Liberia recommended in the report. We believe that it is vital to consider in particular the ECOWAS view on this matter.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. I also thank Ambassador Chowdhury, Chairman of the Security Council Committee concerning Sierra Leone, for his work and for the statement he made earlier. I am grateful also for the presence of the members of the Panel of Experts on Sierra Leone Diamonds and Arms, and I thank them for producing such a worthwhile report.

The Swedish Presidency of the European Union will be making a statement later in this debate with which Ireland fully associates itself.

The report of the Panel of Experts gives an account of the reckless and illegal exploitation of a precious natural resource belonging to the people of Sierra Leone. The evidence before us in the report is detailed, compelling and disturbing. There are widespread violations of the Council's measures. Sierra

Leone's diamond resources are still subject to illegal mining. These resources are converted into arms, which are then used against Sierra Leoneans. The report also speaks of overwhelming evidence of Liberia's active support of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in its campaign against the Government of Sierra Leone, and of assistance from others both in the region and elsewhere. The description of the role played in the conflict by aircraft is salutary, while the chicanery involved in aircraft registration merely attests to the brazen resolve of those who profit so hugely from the arms trade.

The Panel's recommendations are numerous and, in places, far-reaching. Some of them will be easier to implement and some will be more effective than others. However, this should not cause us to shy away from looking at the report in its totality as we consider the next steps to be taken. In doing so, we should keep in mind that concerted action needs to be taken both in the region and in places far away from West Africa.

Ireland welcomes the introduction of a new diamond certification system by the authorities in Sierra Leone. It is a concrete measure to address the problem of conflict and illicit diamonds. We note, though, the Panel's comments on the certification system's viability in the absence of similar controls in neighbouring countries. The role of Sierra Leone's neighbours is crucial in this regard. We are also interested in the Panel's recommendation of an interim certification scheme for all diamond-exporting countries.

The problems relating to the origin of diamonds are not restricted to the producing countries, however. The case studies and the improbable trading statistics revealed by the report show that the importing countries, too, have issues to address. That is why we support the Panel's recommendation of a global certification scheme. We know that the "Kimberley Process" is addressing this topic and we believe it should work as quickly as possible towards this goal. In this context, we welcome the workshop on the envisaged certification scheme, which is to be held in Namibia in March.

It would not be credible to address the report of the panel without referring to the truly grave allegations levelled at the Government of Liberia. The report portrays the Liberian administration playing a highly destabilizing and destructive role in the region. Its multifaceted support for the RUF appears to be strong and systematic. The role it plays in assisting the supply of arms to the region is a part of this and the ease with which aircraft appear to register under the Liberian flag raises serious questions about its licensing laws. The report provides further evidence that Liberia is breaking Security Council embargoes regarding the import of weapons into its own territory, which is prohibited by resolution 788 (1992).

Members and non-members will be aware that the Council is currently considering the introduction of a draft resolution aimed at bringing an end to the destabilizing activities of the Liberian Government. This draft resolution picks up on many of the recommendations contained in the report of the Panel. Ireland has already announced its broad support for the measures contained in the draft resolution. In the days ahead we will work to ensure that the Council can act on these as quickly as possible. Ireland is also now considering, together with the other members of the Council, the establishment of a more permanent, broad-reaching panel to monitor targeted sanctions and illegal trafficking of high-value commodities in armed conflicts, such as those measures now under consideration in the Liberian context.

In resolution 1306 (2000), the adequacy of air traffic control systems in the region was placed within the remit of the Panel of Experts. The report shows that the air traffic control system falls short of being adequate, particularly given the deadly cargoes being carried. There appears to be an almost seamless relationship between poor air traffic control systems and the importation of arms into the region.

Of course, it should be underlined that the regional transgressors are not working in isolation. The suppliers of arms and aircraft are from places far away from West Africa. There is a responsibility on the Governments in whose jurisdictions these people reside and materials originate to vigorously monitor them. The benefit of dealing with only part of the chain will be increasingly limited and, in our view, ultimately damaging to the credibility of the Council and the United Nations.

The Panel makes a number of recommendations. We strongly welcome increased collaboration between the relevant actors and bodies such as the International Civil Aviation Organization, the World Customs Organization and Interpol. Some of the

recommendations will require the commitment of considerable resources by the international community. Some will also entail an increasingly active relationship between the United Nations and other agencies. The Council must therefore continue to act as the driving force in efforts to bring peace to Sierra Leone.

It is crucial, too, that national Governments play a full role in preventing the behaviour detailed in the report. The Governments in the region must redouble efforts to bring peace to Sierra Leone. The best way they can do so is to end the illegal trade in diamonds and arms.

Some measures might be incremental in effect. Nonetheless, we should not underestimate the deterring impact that wider, unwelcome publicity might have on the personalities involved or the practical and psychological impact of measures to disrupt the flow of arms and their carriers into Sierra Leone.

There has been a deterioration in the security of the region. We are all conscious or the almost unbearable pressures on Guinea arising from the enormous numbers of refugees within its borders, exacerbated in recent weeks by further RUF attacks. That the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was forced to search for tens of thousands of missing refugees is a grotesque example of the nature of the problem confronting us. These events are directly linked to the illegal trafficking of Sierra Leone diamonds.

The report of the Panel of Experts serves to highlight the extent of the cynical exploitation centred on Sierra Leone. We are witnessing the plundering of one of the world's most underdeveloped countries by an alliance of well-organized criminals. It is a grotesque commentary that a resource which should be a foundation stone for national development is being used against the very people it should benefit.

The United Nations has been grappling with the conflict in Sierra Leone for almost a decade. The deployment of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, following on from the regional deployment of forces of the Economic Community of West African States, signalled an intensified effort to bring stability to Sierra Leone and to the region. The establishment of the Panel of Experts and today's consideration of its report are further important steps in the search for peace. It is vital that the Security Council reinforce its efforts to bring peace and stability to Sierra Leone and its neighbours by acting on the Panel's report.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Niger, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Moutari (Niger), took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): The United States welcomes today's Security Council consideration of the report of the Panel of Experts on Sierra Leone Diamonds and Arms. We commend the Panel's Chairman, Martin Chungong Ayafor, and the other Panel members for their excellent work, completed under difficult circumstances.

My delegation also wishes to commend and to thank the Sierra Leone sanctions Committee Chairman, Ambassador Chowdhury, and the members of the Bangladesh Mission for their valuable and persistent efforts to ensure today's Council consideration of the Panel's report.

In addition, I would also like to welcome Liberian Foreign Minister Captan to today's discussion.

The Panel had only four months in which to complete its tasks, yet it succeeded in addressing complex issues involving networks and operations that make a point of either disguising or hiding their activities. The Panel concluded that there is unequivocal and overwhelming evidence that Liberia has been actively supporting the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) at all levels. This confirms the information that I and other Security Council members received during the Council's mission to Sierra Leone in October.

The Panel also focused on the crucial role of conflict diamonds in the arms trade. Controlling the flow of conflict diamonds and illicit arms is essential in order to end the fighting and destabilization in Sierra

Leone and its neighbouring countries. We are intent on ending the illicit arms-for-diamonds trade that has caused so much devastation and human suffering in Sierra Leone and throughout West Africa. We welcome the upcoming visit of Economic Community of West African States Ministers. We will work hard with Council members, the United Nations and countries of the region to bring the Panel's recommendations into being and to deal firmly with illegal trade and with sanctions violators.

I regret that the Security Council has been given a report that is critical of one of our founding Members. It is particularly troubling for the Government of the United States that Liberia, which once championed the cause of Namibian independence, is complicit in the dismemberment of Sierra Leone and the destabilization of Guinea. The Council has begun to consider a draft resolution, proposed by my Government and the United Kingdom, to impose new, multilateral sanctions against the Government of Liberia. Let us be clear on one point: the measures proposed in the draft resolution on Liberia are intended to impact the Government of Liberia. They are designed to bring an end to President Taylor's ongoing support of the RUF and his continued engagement in illicit arms-for-diamonds trafficking. The goal of the proposed sanctions is to target the support system of the presidency and Government leadership, and each proposal was selected with that goal in mind. Ambassador Eldon has outlined the specific measures that are contained in the draft resolution.

We do not seek these restrictive measures out of animosity towards the Liberian people. Our deep historical roots to Liberia are already well known in this Council. The thousands of American development workers, Peace Corps volunteers, missionaries and other friends who have served the people of Liberia are saddened to see what has become of the country that once welcomed them. The tens of thousands of American citizens of Liberian origin now residing in the United States are justifiably concerned for their country of origin, their families and their friends.

Regrettably, we are forced to support new measures against the Government of Liberia because of its illegal support for insurgents in Sierra Leone, its use of one of the world's most repugnant insurgencies as a proxy, its illegal exploitation of the natural wealth of Sierra Leone and its promotion of instability in the region.

We note the recent announcements of the Government of Liberia that it is disengaging from Sierra Leone and ending its support for the RUF. We will examine this closely. But we are concerned that these last-minute announcements in the face of imminent Council action, after months of discussion, are a calculated ruse designed to divide the Security Council rather than to signal any genuine change of policy. It is instructive that it took the possibility of sanctions to move the Government of Liberia to even declaratory action. The steps announced thus far are unconvincing and not sufficient.

There is no argument within the Council, or indeed within the international community, I believe, on the facts. The Government of Liberia created and now sustains the RUF. Our Security Council mission to the region in October heard very clearly, and warned, about Liberia's continuing role. Liberia and its proxies are looting the natural resources of Sierra Leone and fomenting continuing conflict. Its behaviour is a key factor of instability in the region and must be changed.

We have heard proposals — read of proposals — from Foreign Minister Captan on implementing the Panel's recommendations, and we have heard demands that we treat the Liberian Government as innocent until proven guilty. I hope that the Foreign Minister will take a message back to Monrovia that the Council is unanimous in its belief that the Government of Liberia bears major responsibility for the strife in Sierra Leone and the destabilization of the region. The message I hope the Minister will receive from this meeting is that the question before this Council is not whether, but how best, to deal with the role of his Government in the region and to convince it to turn from supporting and directing the RUF to becoming part of the solution. The answer lies in specific actions and not in more patience with empty promises.

The sanctions we have proposed mirror steps recommended in the report of the Panel of Experts. They are designed to undermine the Government of Liberia's ability to conduct war against its neighbours. They will not visit hardships on the people of Liberia. Indeed, we note that several courageous Liberians have risked their lives to call on us to adopt these sanctions.

The report of the Panel of Experts clearly establishes the links between ongoing support for the RUF and continuing violence and suffering in Sierra Leone and the region. We, as a Council, must act to

break that link and to re-establish peace and security in a region beset for too many years with conflict and human hardship.

We look forward later on in this discussion to hearing Minister Captan's remarks, and those of other nations of the region. I have been frank about the nature of the problem we must address. Let me conclude that we are interested in results — in concrete change, not declarations. My Government will welcome the day when we are convinced that Liberia has become part of the solution instead of a force for further suffering and instability.

Mr. Neewoor (Mauritius): Mr. President, my delegation is grateful to you for having organized this important open meeting of the Council this morning.

I wish to thank Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury of Bangladesh for the important briefing he has just given us as Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997) concerning Sierra Leone. Thanks to his able stewardship of the Committee, we have before us today a comprehensive report by the Panel of Experts on Sierra Leone Diamonds and Arms, as mandated by Security Council resolution 1306 (2000). The preparation of this important report no doubt required enormous courage, determination and dedicated hard work by the Panel. We are grateful to the Chairman and all the Panel members for this and thank them very warmly for their highly professional, well-researched and bold report and for the important recommendations they have proposed. We welcome the presence of the Panel members in our discussion today.

As I speak on the Panel's report, the image that comes to mind is that of numerous children, women and men who have suffered cruel death or have been severely maimed and disabled in the senseless conflict that has gripped Sierra Leone for several years now. It is not without a sense of revulsion that we note from the Panel's findings that the misery inflicted on the people of Sierra Leone is not really for a legitimate political, social, economic or humanitarian cause championed by the rebel forces, but actually for the self-enrichment of individuals and their friends, at home and elsewhere, utilizing the natural resources of the country and diamonds from Sierra Leone in particular. It is indeed outrageous that the lives of so many innocent Sierra Leonean children, women and men have been extinguished and so many others have been condemned to live miserably for ever with vital limbs cut off simply because a powerful few have entertained a sinister dream to amass unlimited wealth through illegitimate means. It is our firm belief that the collective conscience of mankind, represented here in the United Nations, must demand answers from all those who stand accused of involvement in the heinous crimes against the people of Sierra Leone.

The nexus between unbridled political ambition, weapons trade and diamonds was established earlier by a similar panel on Angola, where again a meaningless civil war, financed through the illegal exploitation of diamonds in rebel-held areas, has left countless dead or maimed for life.

Sierra Leone was the next victim of such a nexus, and now we have another panel investigating the same phenomenon in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The international community cannot afford to allow the diamond-arms-politics nexus to cross yet another frontier, be it in Africa or elsewhere. This deadly phenomenon is too costly in every respect. It is extremely costly, in particular, in terms of human suffering. It also drains national and international resources, which normally should be allocated to the development agenda. We have seen that civil conflicts — as in Sierra Leone, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — spill easily across frontiers, and whole subregions get embroiled in them one way or another. I wish to commend the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for its tireless efforts to help resolve conflicts in the West African subregion despite the meagre resources of the member countries.

The international community, through the United Nations, has invested heavily in peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, as in other conflict situations. The sanctions regime put in place by the Security Council for Sierra Leone is for the purpose of ending the civil war in the country as soon as possible. The fact that the sanctions have been violated, and the conflict has thus been prolonged, is reprehensible and needs to be condemned most vigorously.

It is already well known that the Sierra Leone sanctions are being violated with impunity by vested interests in the illicit diamond trade and by suppliers of arms to the rebels. The report of the Panel has not only confirmed this, but has also identified the guilty in many cases.

The Panel has also proposed a number of measures for the Security Council to take to better enforce the sanctions regime. We have examined the recommendations carefully and believe they are appropriate. We welcome in particular the recommendations of the Panel to establish a global certification scheme to regulate all trade in diamonds. Such a measure will help put an end to illegal trade in diamonds and to the consequences of this nefarious practice. We also welcome the Panel's recommendations aimed at controlling the flow of arms. In this regard, we believe that the greater onus must rest with the countries where the arms originate. We also support the proposal that a proper mechanism be set up within the United Nations system to better enforce sanctions imposed by the Security Council.

We have no doubt that before making its recommendations the Panel researched the issues fully and pursued every lead to its logical conclusion. We also believe that if any party feels aggrieved, it should have the opportunity to explain its position — backed by proper evidence and within a specified time frame — to the Security Council. In this regard, we wish to underline the need for the Council to take action as quickly as possible on the Panel' s recommendations.

The role of Liberia in sanctions-busting, as well as in destabilising its neighbours, is clear and beyond any doubt. My delegation has taken note of the draft resolution under consideration to further strengthen sanctions against Liberia. We propose to support the draft resolution, and we shall participate actively in its finalization so that it can be adopted by the Council.

Mr. Kuchynksi (Ukraine): First of all, we would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. It provides an important opportunity for the Council to listen to the views of the Member States and to take them duly into account before the Council takes appropriate action. Our thanks also go to Ambassador Chowdhury for his chairmanship of the Sierra Leone sanctions Committee and for presenting such a comprehensive report.

I wish to take this opportunity to reassure the Council that Ukraine will continue to support the activities of the Committee and will contribute to the collective efforts of the international community to ensure that the measures taken by the Security Council produce tangible results.

We particularly welcome the participation of the members of the Panel of Experts on Sierra Leone Diamonds and Arms at this meeting. We would also like to commend their work in preparing an extensive and comprehensive report, which embraces important aspects of the implementation of the Sierra Leone sanctions. At all stages of the Panel' s work, including during the visit of a member of the Panel to Ukraine, our Government fully cooperated with the Panel of Experts in the fulfilment of their mandate. Ukraine is prepared to maintain such a level of cooperation in the sanctions Committee.

My delegation attaches particular importance to the consideration of the report of the Panel of Experts on Sierra Leone both by the sanctions Committee — which is entrusted to consider information concerning violations and to recommend appropriate measures in response thereto — and by the Security Council proper. We also believe that the active involvement of other Member States in this process will be extremely useful for the comprehensive, all-round examination of various issues raised in the report.

The report and the findings of the Panel of Experts represent an important source of information with regard to the ways and means in which sanctions are being violated and the sources of illegal financing for the activities of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). We commend the efforts of the Panel to address these issues, and we consider the recommendations of the Panel valuable terms of reference for consideration by the Council. We also note as a positive development that a number of measures and initiatives stemming from the recommendations of the Panel — including in the fields of diamond certification and trade, arms and air traffic control — have already been taken by the countries in the region. In this connection, I would like to draw the Council's attention to the recent decisions by the Liberian Government to ground all Liberian registered aircraft, and its proposal to establish for Liberia a United Nations-supervised monitoring regime for diamonds and the arms trade. As we understand it, further measures are being considered at the regional level by member States of the Economic Community of West African States.

All these developments clearly demonstrate that the work of the Panel and its report have already had a visible effect on the turn of events surrounding the Sierra Leone conflict. There is hope that these developments, coupled with a responsible approach by

the Council, will help to advance the peace process in Sierra Leone.

At the same time, I must say that a number of the Experts' recommendations are of a rather controversial character. In our view, they should be looked at from the point of view of their consistency with both the original mandate of the Panel and with the work being done in other forums. As an example, let me refer to the recommendation contained in paragraph 262 of the report, which suggests that consideration could be given to the Security Council embargo on weapons exports from specific producer countries until internationally acceptable certification schemes have been developed.

We are convinced that this issue, as well as a number of other issues of a general or global nature, should be dealt with in the specific competent forums. In this regard, we would like to recall the idea initially put forward by Ukraine regarding the convening of an international experts meeting of major arms-producing countries with a view to elaborating effective measures to prevent the reselling of arms by end-users to third parties. I should also note in this context the ongoing work in the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as the anticipated convening at Budapest in April of this year of a meeting on small arms. A similar observation could be made with regard to the recommendation regarding the establishment of a global certification scheme for diamonds, as well as with regard to some other recommendations.

Let me now turn to several points in the report in which my country is specifically referred to. Relevant comments in this regard were made by our delegation in the sanctions Committee. I will therefore try to recall briefly some of those comments.

The Panel extensively looked into the case of the delivery of Ukrainian weapons to Burkina Faso in early 1999. The report confirms that a Ukrainian license for the sale of the weaponry was granted after the Ukrainian authorities had received an authentic end-user certificate from the Ministry of Defence of Burkina Faso. In that regard, I wish to recall that as far as back as April 1999, and later on in June 1999, on its own initiative and after its own thorough investigation, Ukraine provided detailed information about that shipment to the Sierra Leone sanctions Committee. The results of the investigation, which were undertaken by the competent authorities of Ukraine, proved beyond any doubt that the delivery was made in full compliance with the legislation of Ukraine and the relevant requirements of the pertinent Security Council resolutions. The Government of Ukraine expressed its grave concern on several occasions about reports that that shipment had been subsequently re-exported, in violation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

As to the references in the report to allegations of mercenary activities by Ukrainian nationals, I wish to reconfirm that my delegation formally requested the Committee's assistance in obtaining all relevant information in the Panel's possession that would facilitate a criminal investigation of the facts by Ukraine. The Committee has also been informed that mercenary activities are prohibited under Ukrainian law, which provides for criminal prosecution of offenders. In this respect, I also wish to recall that my Government is now providing over 500 peacekeepers and over 400 armoured personnel carriers and trucks to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. This is a concrete illustration of Ukraine's commitment to assist the Government of Sierra Leone and the international community to bring peace and stability to that war-torn country.

I would now like to say a few words regarding the working methods of the Panel. My delegation strongly believes that the following aspects should be given the highest priority in order to ensure the highest standards of credibility and effectiveness in the work of the Experts.

First, the Panel's mandate should be pursued in close cooperation and consultation with the Governments concerned. In other words, we believe that all relevant evidence should be brought to the attention of the Governments so that they will have an opportunity to provide their replies and other relevant information to the Experts when their report is being prepared.

Secondly, all statements or reports should based on thoroughly investigated and corroborated facts.

Thirdly, in our view, the highest degree of credibility should be extended to Governments that bear the main responsibility for compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of the Security Council.

Finally, I would like to reiterate Ukraine's adherence to strengthening the effectiveness of the sanctions regime as an important tool to curtail the ability of the Revolutionary United Front to wage war. We are ready to work closely and actively with the Council on the elaboration of workable measures to achieve that objective.

Mr. Strømmen (Norway): We commend Ambassador Chowdhury and the Panel of Experts on their thorough work, and we welcome their report and their recommendations on improving adherence to the sanctions regime. The report is a vital follow-up to the adoption of resolution 1306 (2000) last year, and it is important that the report is discussed in an open meeting like this, thus focusing publicly on the issues of diamonds and arms as they relate to the conflict in Sierra Leone.

The linkage between the illegal trade in arms and diamonds and war of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone is well documented. The lasting political tension and instability in Sierra Leone and neighbouring countries have grave humanitarian consequences, for instance, in the form of mass movements of refugees and internally displaced persons in the region. The conflict in Sierra Leone is one of the most violent wars in recent African history, and the physical and mental torture inflicted on the civilian population has made the humanitarian needs enormous.

The regional aspects of the conflict in Sierra Leone are cause for great concern. Following the ceasefire between the RUF and the Government of Sierra Leone in November last year, we have seen increased fighting in the border areas between Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. The fighting has forced humanitarian workers to leave the area, and refugees and internally displaced persons are moving deeper into Guinea, to Conakry and back to Sierra Leone. Tighter implementation of the sanctions and a general improvement regarding the circulation of small arms in the region would improve the security situation for the civilian population and humanitarian workers.

We have carefully studied the recommendations contained in the report of the Panel of Experts, and I would like to comment on some of the more general suggestions on how to improve the sanctions regime established by resolution 1306 (2000) in particular, and other United Nations sanctions and embargoes, in general.

Before I go into the specifics, I would like to make a few general remarks on the use of sanctions. We think sanctions are an important tool for the Security Council and the international community in the efforts to protect international peace and security. The conclusion of the recent report on Angola that the sanctions against UNITA are hurting UNITA's ability to wage war, exemplifies this. Sanctions should, however, be used with caution, and they must be shaped so that they target the real problem at hand. Consequently, we must do what we can to prevent sanctions from having unwanted side effects — for instance, in the form of a negative humanitarian impact on the civilian population that, indeed, we want to protect.

In this connection, let me also stress the importance of the general responsibility of Member States to implement the obligations deriving from United Nations resolutions establishing sanctions regimes. Although countries neighbouring conflict areas are acting in contempt of the United Nations sanctions regime, countries in Europe and other Western States must also pay heed to the fact that the importation of illicit diamonds from Africa and the exportation of arms from Europe to non-State actors, fuel conflicts. Authorities must make all efforts to prevent the sanctions from being eroded by curbing shady businesses and practices.

However, as is also evident from the report of the Panel of Experts, United Nations sanctions regimes are not always followed up properly. We believe that, in order to make existing and future sanctions more effective, the recommendation from the Panel of Experts regarding the establishment of a general monitoring mechanism deserves further, serious consideration. From the recent reports on sanctions related to Sierra Leone and Angola, we see that both regimes share many of the same problems and weaknesses as regards the implementation and violation of the sanctions. We also see from both reports that monitoring is a key issue. The creation of a central capacity within the United Nations system for ongoing monitoring of adherence to Security Council sanctions and embargoes could be a useful tool in strengthening the implementation of sanctions. It could also be a useful contribution to achieving the goals already stated in the 1 December 2000 General

Assembly resolution on conflict diamonds. However, the further details regarding the possible establishment, mandate and shape of such an instrument is a question that needs careful consideration.

Norway supports the idea of establishing, as soon as possible, a standardized global certification scheme for diamonds. As pointed out in the report, existing control mechanisms in Sierra Leone are worthless as long as there are no controls in neighbouring countries. As a sponsor of the General Assembly resolution of 1 December 2000, Norway has already stated its commitment to establishing a global certification mechanism to reduce the trade in conflict diamonds. Pending the establishment of a global certification scheme, Norway supports the establishment of a regional system covering all diamond-exporting States in West Africa.

Many of the recommendations in the report and the problems that they address are related to the primary supporter of the RUF, namely, Liberia. Norway shares the concern of the Panel of Experts that Security Council resolutions on diamonds and weapons are being broken with impunity. Norway shares the opinion that the role played by Liberia in this conflict demands concrete action from the Security Council. In our view, it is now time to go to the heart of the matter and impose sanctions on Liberia in an attempt to make the country stop destabilizing the whole region through its activities relating to, for instance, diamonds and weapons. This conduct is a threat to international peace and security, and the Security Council is currently considering a draft resolution on sanctions against Liberia. This work has Norway's full support.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Singapore.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Chowdhury for his excellent presentation on the report of the Panel of Experts established under resolution 1306 (2000), concerning the collection of information on possible violations of the arms embargo imposed under paragraph 2 of resolution 1171 (1998) and the link between trade in diamonds and trade in arms and related *matériel*, as well as the inadequacy of the air traffic control systems of the West African region.

I would also like to thank the five members of the Panel — Mr. Martin Chungong Ayafor, the Chairman; Mr. Atabou Bodian; Mr. Johan Peleman; Mr. Harjit Singh Sandhu; and Mr. Ian Smillie — for their efforts in producing the report. Each of the Panel's recommendations speaks forcefully for itself and, possibly, for the future of Sierra Leone. The recommendations in the report are sobering, particularly in relation to the allegations against Liberia, its support for the activities of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and its role in fuelling the conflict in Sierra Leone.

The situation concerning Sierra Leone has been on the Security Council's agenda for some years now. The civilian population of Sierra Leone has endured more than 10 years of shocking brutality, failed peace agreements and the murder, rape and mutilation of thousands at the hands of the RUF. We note that if the recommended sanctions proposed against Liberia in the Panel's report are taken up by the Council and implemented, they will constitute the most serious and comprehensive United Nations embargo imposed on an African country in recent times.

Sanctions are an important tool of the Council in carrying out its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is therefore the obligation of all Members to comply with the sanctions imposed by the Council. However, we need to give teeth to United Nations sanctions and take that one further step to ensure that States do not violate them with impunity. The credibility of the United Nations demands that we deal firmly with sanctions-busters and those who support or take part in activities aimed at undermining the stability of their regional neighbours.

We have read the Panel's report very thoroughly and with an open mind. When we read the report, we bore in mind two very important principles: evidentiary standards and due process. On standards of verification, we are glad to note that the Panel, as stated in paragraph 63 of its report (S/2000/1195), agreed at the outset of its work to use high evidentiary standards in its investigations. According to the report, this required at least two credible and independent sources of information to substantiate a finding. On due process, we also note from paragraph 63 of the report that

> "Wherever possible, the Panel also agreed to put allegations to those concerned in order to allow them the right of reply."

Today's debate is very much a part of this process. That is why we have provided the opportunity

today for all affected States to be heard on the report. Some countries have availed themselves of this opportunity. In this connection, we look forward to hearing the views of the ministerial delegation of the Economic Community of West African States in the coming week. We also urge all other affected parties to communicate their views to the Council soon.

It is imperative that the Council act quickly, but we must also be seen to act justly. However, this Council must not flinch from acting resolutely and take all necessary measures once such a course of action is clearly justified.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Sierra Leone, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Kamara (Sierra Leone): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council in the first month of the new year and the first month of your country's term as a non-permanent member of the Council. I should like to add that my delegation is also pleased to see the representative of a sister Commonwealth nation directing the work of this body. I would like to assure you, Mr. President, of our cooperation in addressing the complex problems on the Council's agenda, including those pertaining to Sierra Leone. Allow me also to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Lavrov of the Russian Federation, for the efficient manner in which he conducted the Council's affairs during the month of December.

As the Security Council meets to begin preliminary consideration of the report of the Panel of Experts set up to collect information on the possible link between trade in Sierra Leone diamonds and trade in arms, I think it is relevant to cite the following lines from President Kabbah's broadcast message to the people of Sierra Leone on 21 February 1999, almost two years ago — this was immediately after the mayhem that killed over 5,000 people in Freetown in January 1999. This message was subsequently circulated as a document of the Security Council:

> "I would like to appeal to the United Nations Security Council, especially the permanent members who have the political and military means at their disposal, to exert pressure, first of all, on those States and individuals that continue to supply the weapons and logistics that are being used to kill our people. It is no secret that without such external support, the RUF [Revolutionary United Front] and its allies would not have had the capacity to maintain their military campaigns and wreak such havoc in several parts of the country." *(S/1999/186, annex)*

President Kabbah went on to say,

> "The atrocities have been horrendous.
>
> "The Security Council should act before it is too late. The consequences of inaction or of continued lukewarm responses would be disastrous, not only for the people of Sierra Leone, but also for millions of their neighbours in the entire West African subregion." *(ibid.)*

This was in 1999.

In the view of my delegation, the report of the United Nations Panel of Experts on Sierra Leone Diamonds and Arms, which is now before this Council, is a loud and clear response to President Kabbah's appeal for further action against those who continue to support the RUF in prolonging the brutal conflict in Sierra Leone through illegal trade in diamonds and weapons and in exporting terror to neighbouring countries in West Africa.

The Government of Sierra Leone has studied the report carefully. Its findings are credible. Its recommendations are far-reaching but viable. We maintain the view that the report constitutes a landmark discovery regarding the major impediments to the restoration of peace and stability in Sierra Leone. Members of the Panel performed their assignments responsibly and as objectively as possible, and we commend them for a job well done. In the same vein, we would also like to commend Ambassador Chowdhury, Chairman of the Security Council Committee.

For almost 10 years, and notwithstanding the brutality of the rebel atrocities committed in Sierra Leone, the Government of Sierra Leone did not openly name any State or individual involved in supporting the RUF. In the name of diplomacy, in the name of African brotherhood, in the name of African solidarity, in the spirit of good-neighbourliness, and with the hope that reason would soon prevail, the Government of Sierra

Leone, albeit reluctantly, refrained from subscribing to the tactic of "name and shame".

But then we had to ask ourselves how long African solidarity should be allowed to overshadow the plight of the victims of the conflicts and prolong their suffering. How long should the identities of those directly and actively involved in blood-diamond transactions and illicit arms transactions across our borders be concealed under the cloak of African brotherhood? Indeed, how long should anyone, including members of the Security Council, continue to ignore those who support rebel movements that abduct, hold hostage, humiliate, disarm and even hurt and kill United Nations peacekeepers and humanitarian workers? As we know, many of those peacekeepers are from the developing world, including Africans who have left their homes and families to help keep the peace in our countries under the flag of the United Nations.

Today, against the background of the painful events of the past several years, the revelations contained in the report of the United Nations Panel of Experts and the serious humanitarian crisis now emerging along the borders of the Mano River Union States, we are compelled to say, enough is enough. I would like to repeat: enough is enough.

Therefore, the Sierra Leone delegation would like to state for the record that it concurs with the findings of the United Nations Panel of Experts. In particular, we agree with the experts that there is

> "unequivocal and overwhelming evidence that Liberia has been actively supporting the RUF at all levels, in providing training, weapons and related *matériel*, logistical support, a staging ground for attacks and a safe haven for retreat and recuperation". (*S/2000/1195, enclosure, para. 20*)

In this regard, we concur with the Panel that the Security Council should take effective and appropriate mandatory measures to deal with this serious threat to international peace and security.

We take this position, first, because it is the truth that whatever terminology or euphemism is used to describe relations between the RUF and Liberia, there is evidence that Liberia has been providing the RUF with military and other types of assistance to wage and prolong the conflict in our country. This is the truth. We have a saying in Sierra Leone: telling a friend the truth should in no way destroy the friendship.

Secondly, we have taken this position because of the repeated calls for the international community to assist Africa in ending its armed conflicts and in dealing with the root causes and socio-economic consequences of those conflicts. In this connection, we are reminded of what Secretary-General Kofi Annan told the summit of the Organization of African Unity in Lomé last July:

> "My friends, let us face some unpleasant facts. Africa is the only region where conflicts are not decreasing. Africa contains almost half of the world's refugees and internally displaced persons." (*SG/SM/7485/Rev.1*)

A third reason for taking the position I have just outlined is that Sierra Leone would like the Security Council to seriously consider endorsing the recommendations of the Panel in a binding resolution under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. By doing so, the Council would be helping to avert further escalation of the conflict in the West African subregion. Here my delegation recalls that a large number of States and organizations have been asking the Security Council to change the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone from peacekeeping to peace enforcement. In other words, they want more effective action to end the conflict in Sierra Leone.

I should also add that our subregional organization, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has recently told the Secretary-General of the United Nations that in order to successfully discharge their mandate, there is every likelihood that the ECOWAS troops to be deployed along the border areas of Guinea and Liberia may need to employ strong rules of engagement to help stop further armed incursions and restore peace in those areas.

For those who, for one reason or the other, have reservations about the recommendations of the Panel of Experts, which advocate strong measures by the Security Council, my delegation would like to recall the following.

Some delegations say that sanctions should not hurt innocent people. We agree. But weapons bought from the sale of our diamonds are being used to maim

and kill thousands of our people in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leoneans have lives too. There are thousands of Sierra Leonean refugees and displaced persons who are unable to return to their homes because of the prolongation of the conflict in Sierra Leone and the escalation of cross-border skirmishes.

The people of Sierra Leone, including traumatized victims of the rebel war, are suffering as a result of the continued occupation of the main diamond areas of the country by the RUF and the illegal export of diamonds from those areas, mainly through Liberia.

For three months last year, while the RUF and its supporters were engaged in the traffic of so-called conflict or blood diamonds and weapons, the Government of Sierra Leone, under the provisions of Security Council resolution 1306 (2000), was not allowed to export any diamonds.

The diamond certification regime instituted by the Government of Sierra Leone last October is under the scrutiny of the United Nations and subject to periodic review by the United Nations sanctions Committee on Sierra Leone.

While Liberia continues to freely support the RUF in the acquisition of arms, in violation of Security Council resolution 1171 (1998), the Government of Sierra Leone is complying with the provisions of that resolution relating to the stipulation that the importation of arms and military equipment by the Government for its legitimate self-defence should be done through prior-named points of entry and that relevant information about such imports should be communicated to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall then promptly notify all Member States.

My delegation holds the view that these and other points should be taken into account in any discussion by the Security Council about the imposition of sanctions based on the recommendations of the Panel of Experts. In short, we are saying that Sierra Leone is itself under certain constraints as a result of existing mandatory Security Council measures relating to arms and diamonds. However, I can assure the Council that the people of Sierra Leone consider such constraints to be temporary hurdles along the path towards peace and security in Sierra Leone and neighbouring countries.

My delegation has no doubt that the endorsement by the Security Council and the implementation of most of the measures proposed by the Panel of Experts will help to bring about genuine peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone and to stabilize the entire West African subregion.

The President: I thank the representative of Sierra Leone for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia. On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to him and invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Captan (Liberia): The Government of Liberia expresses its gratitude to the Security Council for the opportunity to make a statement at this important hearing on the report of the Panel of Experts appointed pursuant to Security Council resolution 1306 (2000) in relation to Sierra Leone.

The Government of Liberia notes the report of the Panel of Experts with serious reservations. Members of the Security Council will recall that the involvement of the Government of Liberia in the resolution of the conflict in Sierra Leone is a result of a mandate from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), contained in a final communiqué issued in Bamako. In that communiqué, the Authority of Heads of State of ECOWAS requested the President of Liberia to

> "get personally involved in solving the issues which hamper the peace process in Sierra Leone and to seek adequate solutions in consultation with the other Heads of State".

Also, the Government of Liberia could not have been an uninterested bystander. Liberia and Sierra Leone share common historical, cultural and family ties, as well as a common border. In addition, Liberia is hosting over 100,000 Sierra Leonean refugees as a result of the civil conflict. It is the considered position of the Government of Liberia that peace in Sierra Leone is synonymous with to peace in Liberia. There can be no peace and stability in Liberia until there are enduring peace and stability in Sierra Leone and other neighbouring countries.

In keeping with the ECOWAS mandate, the President of Liberia organized several meetings in Monrovia between the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leadership, ECOWAS leaders — including the Chairman of ECOWAS, President Alpha Konaré; the

President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo; the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, President Gnassingbé Eyadema; President Yahya Jammeh of the Gambia — and officials of the United States Government and the United Nations, aimed at moving the peace process forward. Meetings were also convened between leaders of the RUF and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) in Monrovia, which led to the return to Freetown of Corporal Foday Sankoh and Johnny Paul Koroma. The President also averted a potential armed confrontation between Foday Sankoh and Sam Bockarie that had the potential of derailing the peace process in Sierra Leone. The President accepted the request of ECOWAS, in consultation with the United Nations, to remove Sam Bockarie from Sierra Leone to Liberia.

It must be recalled that, at the request of ECOWAS and the United Nations, the President of Liberia negotiated the release of over 500 United Nations peacekeepers who had been taken hostage by the RUF. In addition, Liberia has permitted RUF delegations going to ECOWAS-sponsored meetings to transit through its territory. Liberia has also permitted RUF officials to hold meetings on its territory with officials of ECOWAS and the United Nations. The appointment of a new interlocutor and leadership for the RUF was achieved as a result of an initiative of the President of Liberia at a meeting held between some heads of State of ECOWAS and the RUF commanders in Monrovia on 26 July 2000. These efforts on the part of the President of Liberia were made with the sole objective of furthering the peace process in Sierra Leone.

Notwithstanding these initiatives, the Government of Liberia has and continues to be the target of grossly unsubstantiated allegations of diamond smuggling and gun running with the Revolutionary United Front.

On the issue of diamonds, the Government of Liberia can neither deny nor confirm that the war in Sierra Leone is financed by the sale of conflict diamonds. What the Government of Liberia can confirm is that it is neither connected nor a party to the illicit trade of Sierra Leonean diamonds. If, as claimed in the report, the Government of Liberia was exporting and selling $217-million-worth of diamonds annually to Belgium, the report fails to provide evidence of a trail of financial transactions implicating the Government of Liberia.

According to the Panel's report, during the period 1994-1999, a total of $227-million-worth of illicit diamonds was traded annually between the three neighbouring countries of Guinea, Gambia and Côte d'Ivoire, in addition to the alleged $217-million value of illicit Sierra Leonean diamonds that were purportedly exported from Liberia. Significantly, these figures exclude the official exports from Sierra Leone. It is puzzling that the experts' report would attempt to have the international community believe that, during this period, the value of Sierra Leone's annual production of diamonds was approximately $450 million. Clearly, these figures are grossly inflated. No one familiar with the industry would agree with the Panel that the pre-conflict value of Sierra Leone's annual production was anywhere close to $450 million.

It is acknowledged that smuggling is endemic to the diamond industry worldwide and not limited to Sierra Leone. Historically, Liberia itself has faced this problem and previous Governments have been unable to adequately address it. This Government finds itself in a much weaker position, having recently emerged from a disastrous seven-year civil war that completely destroyed the basic national infrastructure. The problem has been further exacerbated by the Government's lack of resources and personnel, including customs, immigration, transport and communications.

Liberia's export statistics clearly illustrate that the 1987 pre-war official diamond export was 295,000 carats. This is in contrast to the official export figures of 8,500 carats for 1998 and 1999 respectively. The Ministry of Finance estimates that this represents only 10 per cent of the domestic production, and the Ministry of Land, Mines and Energy estimates it to be 20 per cent. In other words, depending on which figure is used, between 80 and 90 per cent of Liberia's domestic production of diamonds is smuggled out of the country. This should refute the conclusion reached in paragraph 89 of the Panel's report that "it is not conceivable that so much of Liberia's own diamond production could avoid the detection of government".

With regard to the supply of arms to the RUF, the Panel's conclusion erroneously presupposes that virtually all of RUF's weapons are obtained from external sources, in this case Liberia. However, the Panel negates this conclusion when it recognizes the following sources of weapons acquired or seized by the RUF — namely, considerable amounts of weaponry

seized from the Sierra Leone armed forces; a significant number of weapons seized from a Guinean unit of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in January 2000; and another Guinean unit serving under the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) that had previously been disarmed during ambushes and seizures. Great amounts of rifles were lost to the rebels, as well as eight armoured personnel carriers and several other military vehicles, when UNAMSIL contingents were kidnapped and disarmed in May 2000. This can be seen in paragraph 179 of the Panel's report. Additional sources of weapons to the RUF include those seized from the Indian contingent of UNAMSIL.

In addition, the RUF obtained weapons directly from the Sierra Leone army inventory when the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), headed by Johnny Paul Koroma, took power in May 1997 and entered into a power-sharing arrangement with the RUF. The Sierra Leone Government may also have been a source of supply to the RUF when it requested two waivers of the provisions of the ECOWAS protocol on the small arms moratorium on 23 June 2000 and 18 July 2000. The waivers were to permit the importation from the United Kingdom of five rounds of 7.62 NATO ammunition, 4,000 rounds of 81 mm mortar ammunition, and five million rounds of 7.62 NATO link ammunition for General Purpose Machine Guns (GPMGs).

Given the pattern of events in Sierra Leone, it is not an unreasonable assumption that a substantial portion of these shipments also ended up in RUF's hands. And it should be noted that in paragraph 82 of the report, it is confirmed that additional arms shipments were received by the RUF from neighbouring Guinea based on RUF diamond sales made to mid-level Guinean military officers. The report further admits in paragraph 248 that the RUF received weapons captured from ECOMOG forces that fell victim to various ambushes.

Given all of these well-documented non-Liberian sources of arms received by the RUF, we find it unfair and erroneous that the Panel would conclude that the primary supplier of arms received by the RUF is Liberia and that this arms flow is a result of official Liberian policy. The Government of Liberia acknowledges that it maintains a training base in Gbartala, Bong County, Liberia, which provides much-needed training facilities for its internal security organizations, including members of the Special Security Services, which provides executive protection, and the Anti-Terrorist Unit, which provides protection for foreign embassies and sensitive Government installations. Non-governmental organizations and foreign observers, including the United States military attaché, have been permitted to visit the training facilities from time to time. The Government of Liberia is currently engaged in discussions with the International Committee of the Red Cross to provide workshops on humanitarian law at the training base. It must be re-emphasized that the Government of Liberia does not train any foreigners at this facility.

As regards Liberian Government initiatives, the Government has reacted to allegations of illicit activities on its border by making concrete proposals to the United Nations to ensure proper monitoring and verification. These have included, among other measures, the deployment of UNAMSIL on the Liberian side of the border with Sierra Leone, the deployment of international monitors at all ports of entry within Liberia, the establishment of a multi-spectral aerial surveillance of Liberian borders and the provision of technical assistance to develop Liberian indigenous capacity to monitor illegal trading of diamonds. Unfortunately, these measures have yet to be considered by the Security Council. In light of the current situation, the Government of Liberia considers it imperative that these measures be given urgent consideration by the Council.

In the area of aircraft registry, on Monday, 22 January 2001, the Government of Liberia took the decision to ground all Liberian-registered aircraft and has requested the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to notify the civil aviation authorities of all member States of this action. The Government has also revoked the appointment of all agents acting on its behalf in matters of aircraft inspection and registration. These measures are in recognition of the fact that many aircraft fly the Liberian flag without the knowledge or authorization of the Government of Liberia, and that some of the aircraft actually registered under the Liberian flag obtained their authorization during the period of the civil war and prior to the election of the present Administration. The Government of Liberia has sought the assistance of ICAO in providing technical assistance to improve its capacity in air traffic control and surveillance.

As concerns disengagement from the Sierra Leonean peace process, while it is the desire of the Government of Liberia to continue to be constructively engaged in the search for peace in Sierra Leone, it is equally true that it cannot continue its engagement in the midst of the grave allegations levied against it by the Panel of Experts, especially the accusation that Liberia has not played a constructive role in Sierra Leone.

In view of the foregoing, the Liberian Government has embarked upon an alternative policy of disengagement from Sierra Leone. Consistent with this policy, all RUF members, including Mr. Sam Bockarie, have been asked to leave Liberia. All members of the RUF have left, with the exception of Mr. Bockarie, whose return to Sierra Leone the RUF leadership has rejected. Cognizant of the ongoing constructive dialogue between the RUF and UNAMSIL, the confidence-building visits into RUF-held territory, the opening of roads and the ongoing discussions concerning the deployment of UNAMSIL forces into RUF territory, the Government of Liberia, in order to avoid a breakout of hostilities occasioned by the return of Mr. Bockarie, has engaged the Chairman of ECOWAS in discussions aimed at identifying a third country that will accept him.

The transiting of RUF members through Liberian territory will no longer be permitted, nor will they be allowed to attend meetings on Liberian territory. My Government is prepared to take further actions to close its border with Sierra Leone and to recuse itself from all discussions on the peace process in Sierra Leone, should the international community deem it necessary.

On the subject of diamonds, cognizant of the complex and difficult problems associated with the monitoring and control of diamond trading in its territory and the subregion, the Government of Liberia has decided to seek the assistance and cooperation of the United Nations in putting into place an appropriate mechanism for the control and monitoring of the diamond trade, especially with the view towards maximizing transparency and control. The Government of Liberia proposes the following.

First, two or more buying companies recognized by the World Diamond Council should be encouraged by the United Nations to set up buying stations in Liberia. Secondly, all diamonds bought by the companies should be exported through the Central Bank of Liberia under international guidelines, as set up under Security Council resolution 1306 (2000), dealing with the certification of Sierra Leonean diamonds. Thirdly, the United Nations should place a monitoring regime at the Central Bank of Liberia to oversee this process for six months. Fourthly, an embargo should be placed on all diamonds exported from Liberia except those certified under this regime. Fifthly, the international community should assist Liberia by providing technical assistance in developing an internationally acceptable certification regime, in order to develop its capacity in dealing with the illegal trading of diamonds.

As regards cross-border incursions, the ongoing cross-border armed incursions within the Mano River Union is a matter of grave concern for the Government of Liberia, which has suffered four different attacks on its territory from neighbouring Guinea. Based upon the complaint of the Government of Liberia to ECOWAS, a committee was established to investigate the incursions. After its report to the heads of State, the committee confirmed that the attacks on Liberia did emanate from the territory of Guinea and were by Liberian dissidents. It was the recommendation of the committee that a military observer mission be deployed at the borders of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone and that dialogue ensue among the heads of State. Liberia welcomes the ECOWAS committee's recommendations and calls upon the United Nations to urgently facilitate the implementation of these recommendations by assisting ECOWAS with its logistical requirements.

Furthermore, Liberia unequivocally condemns all dissident activities within the Mano River Union, including the recent attacks in Guinea.

I now turn to other concerns of the Government of Liberia. The Government expresses its concern at the inclusion of Mr. Ian Smillie as a member of the Panel of Experts. Mr. Smillie co-authored an article in January 2000 entitled, "The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone, Diamonds & Human Security". In the article, he indicts the Liberian Government on charges of supplying the RUF with guns and providing an outlet for the sale of illicit diamonds. Mr. Smillie's conclusions were reached without local investigation, and he did not confront the Government of Liberia with his purported evidence, as is required under the right of reply. His presence on the Panel was prejudicial from its inception.

The Panel of Experts exceeded the mandate provided for it under paragraph 19 (d) of Security Council resolution 1306 (2000), which enjoined the Panel to make

> "observations and recommendations on strengthening the implementation of the measures imposed by paragraph 2 of resolution 1171 (1998), and of those imposed by paragraph 1 above, no later than 31 October 2000".

The measures imposed by the Council referred to above include the prohibition of the direct or indirect import of rough diamonds from Sierra Leone and the prohibition of the sale and supply of arms and related materiel to non-governmental forces in Sierra Leone. The mandate of the Panel envisioned recommendations from experts that would provide remedial measures to strengthen the measures already imposed by the Council, not punitive measures.

The extreme prejudice of the Panel is demonstrated by its recommendation for the imposition of a travel ban on Liberian officials and diplomats by United Nations Member States, a measure that has no basis in the Charter of the United Nations and that denies Liberia the opportunity to conduct its external relations as a sovereign Member of the United Nations. In addition, the proposed ban on the export of Liberian timber is intended to deny the Government substantial revenue, which funds social programmes in the areas of education, health and social welfare. The claim by the Panel that timber revenue is used to purchase arms for the RUF is a contradiction of the Panel's submission that the revenue from diamond sales "is more than enough to sustain its military activities" *(S/2000/1195, para. 80)*.

We wish to draw the attention of the Security Council to the initiative of the member States of our regional organization, the Economic Community of West African States, with regard to the problem in Sierra Leone.

Since the inception of the civil war in Sierra Leone, ECOWAS has remained seized of this matter, while enjoying the support and cooperation of the United Nations. ECOWAS has not only committed peacekeepers to Sierra Leone, but has also formulated a peace plan through negotiations involving all the parties to the conflict and international guarantors. Furthermore, ECOWAS has contributed a significant proportion of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) forces. Sharing the concerns of the Security Council, ECOWAS established a commission of enquiry to investigate the illicit trade in diamonds and the trade in arms — a commission that has yet to receive funding assistance from the international community. Quite recently, ECOWAS successfully negotiated a ceasefire agreement with the RUF, which has led to a general cessation of hostilities, the return of some of the seized UNAMSIL equipment, access to RUF territory and negotiations towards the deployment of UNAMSIL forces into RUF-controlled territory within the next few weeks.

These efforts are ongoing and reflect the commitment and resolve of the member States of ECOWAS to make every effort to achieve a pacific settlement of the Sierra Leonean conflict. It is the hope of the Government of Liberia that the Security Council will encourage, support and utilize this regional initiative, which has proved successful in the past, in Liberia during its civil war. We therefore welcome the upcoming meeting between the ECOWAS delegation and the Security Council.

Within the context of regional peace, security and stability, the Government of Liberia reaffirms its commitment to the Mano River Union binding Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. It unreservedly condemns the atrocities and other human rights abuses inflicted on the civilian population in Sierra Leone as a result of the civil crisis in that country. Those members of the RUF and all others found guilty of violating the Lomé Agreement after its signing must be held accountable for their actions.

The Government of Liberia equally condemns the continuing cross-border attacks, which are contributing to a humanitarian crisis throughout the region. It is imperative that the countries in the subregion, particularly the Mano River Union countries, identify the root causes of instability in the region, including security concerns, and take timely measures to build confidence and restore peace and stability, as the best means of promoting the welfare and development of their respective countries and peoples.

Liberia, as a founding member of the United Nations, remains committed to implementing all resolutions adopted by the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security. In light of the very serious charges made against Liberia and its concrete decisions to address the concerns of

the international community, the Government of Liberia requests the cooperation and support of the Security Council in the undertakings of the Government. This approach, coupled with the regional initiative of ECOWAS, would yield far greater positive results than would the imposition of punitive measures.

The Government of Liberia intends to remain a constructive partner within the comity of nations. It will do whatever is reasonable and positive to contribute to the search for peace in the region.

The Government of Liberia proposes a new programme geared at controlling the illicit diamond trade in West Africa, in Liberia in particular. It requests active United Nations involvement in securing Liberia's borders, so as to avoid the appearance of any interaction with the RUF. It has grounded all Liberian-registered aircraft and has appealed to the International Civil Aviation Organization to assist in the proper registration and use of Liberian-registered aircraft. It agrees to have its airports and seaports monitored by the United Nations to eliminate the entry of war materials which could end up in Sierra Leone. It calls for monitoring of all borders within the Mano River Union to minimize and eliminate cross-border conflicts. It has disengaged itself from all activities related to the peace process in Sierra Leone. It agrees to work in harmony with the United Nations in all of its efforts to end the suffering of the people of Sierra Leone.

The Government of Liberia strongly condemns the atrocities and other human rights abuses inflicted upon the innocent people of Sierra Leone. It is the view of the Government that the perpetrators of these heinous crimes should be brought to justice.

The seven-year Liberian civil war destroyed the country's infrastructure and its productive base, weakened its private sector, reduced its tax base, exacerbated its debt burden, weakened its monetary and fiscal-management capacity, weakened its institutional capacity, ruined its investment climate and created an unprecedented unemployment rate of 85 per cent. Liberia's production base has been narrowed and is dependent mainly on its timber and rubber exports. The external debt burden now totals $2.731 billion, which is considered too high for meaningful economic development.

Liberia faces the challenge of addressing the needs of its population, of which 55 per cent are under 18 years of age and 45 per cent are under the age of 14. Furthermore, 73.2 per cent of Liberia's women are of childbearing age. Poverty-reduction assistance programmes to this population have been withheld through the influence of powerful States, under a regime of punitive sanctions. Nevertheless, we remain hopeful that this Council will not permit the suffering of the Liberian people to be further exacerbated and to remain unabated.

The President: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia for his statement.

We have heard the last speaker for the first part of the meeting. There are a number of speakers remaining on my list. With the concurrence of the members of the Council, I intend to suspend the meeting now, and to resume it at 3 p.m. sharp.

The meeting was suspended at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.4264 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4264th meeting

Thursday, 25 January 2001, 3.15 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Mahbubani	(Singapore)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Ahmed
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Jamaica	Mr. Ward
	Mali	Mr. Ouane
	Mauritius	Mr. Neewoor
	Norway	Mr. Strømmen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Mustapha
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchynski
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Note by the President of the Security Council (S/2000/1195).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

01-22726 (E)

The meeting was resumed at 3.15 p.m.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Sweden. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Schori (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta, and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the report of the United Nations Panel of Experts on Sierra Leone, and we thank Ambassador Chowdhury and all five members of the Panel for the valuable work they have done. This is a comprehensive report by independent experts, which sheds light on the covert network of support to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). We take particular note of the conclusion that systematic and deliberate violations of Security Council resolutions, especially by the leadership of Liberia, continue to fuel this long and bitter conflict which has brought misery to the people of Sierra Leone. Now is the time for the international community to show clearly by its actions that such activities will no longer be tolerated.

The links between conflict diamonds and the arms trade are at the core of the tragedy in Sierra Leone. The RUF continues to rely on illegal trade in diamonds to finance its campaign of violence, and the population continues to suffer.

The European Union is particularly concerned about the role played by the Liberian leadership, under President Charles Taylor, in fuelling the violence in Sierra Leone. The report provides conclusive evidence that President Taylor is a key provider of arms and related material to the RUF. Investigations also show that RUF activities are financed through diamonds mined in Sierra Leone and that the Liberian air registry is being used for illicit trafficking in arms. The EU demands that Liberia and all other parties involved in the violation of sanctions cease such activities immediately.

The Panel of Experts recommends a number of robust and wide-ranging measures to address the problems they have identified. Some of these measures fall beyond the scope of the Security Council itself and require implementation in other forums. For instance, the report once again demonstrates the importance of action on the proliferation of small arms, on both the supply and the demand sides. The EU welcomes, and has expressed its readiness to support, current efforts, such as the Moratorium of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to prevent the illicit trade in small arms in West Africa. The EU also supports efforts by individual countries, both in the region and elsewhere, to tighten their air traffic regulations and strengthen their customs controls.

The EU supports the recommendations of the Panel of Experts for early action to curb the flow of conflict diamonds from the region. We would support coordinated action in order to establish national certification schemes in the region, as well as measures to strengthen control in countries identified as transit States for conflict diamonds. We also underline the importance of the recommendations of the Panel of Experts that a global certification scheme be developed as soon as possible. In this context, the EU emphasizes its strong support for last year's General Assembly resolution 55/56, on conflict diamonds.

The Panel of Experts was mandated to look primarily at the situation in Sierra Leone. Over time it has become apparent that President Taylor's destabilizing agenda is spreading also to Guinea and having dramatic effects on the security and humanitarian situation of refugees and internally displaced persons in that country. We applaud ECOWAS efforts to try to deal with the situation in Guinea, and we believe that a regional dimension of this crisis further underlines the need for action by the Security Council.

The European Union shares the strong concern of the Panel of Experts that sanctions on diamonds and weapons are being broken with impunity. We therefore believe that effective pressure to persuade President Taylor and his associates to comply with the sanctions and to put an end to their support for the rebel movement in neighbouring countries should be a key element in the Security Council's and the international community's response to the West African crisis. Such measures should be targeted at the Liberian leadership — yes — while limiting the impact on the Liberian people themselves.

We express our strong support for the intention of the Security Council to take action in order to put pressure on President Taylor and follow up on the recommendations of the Panel of Experts. In this context, the EU also supports an extension of the mandate of the Panel of Experts.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Canada. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Duval (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset, Mr. President, to echo the sentiments of those who congratulated you this morning on having organized this open meeting of the Security Council, which shows your concern for transparency. I would also like to thank Ambassador Chowdhury and the Panel of Experts, who have done a tremendous job on this question.

Canada welcomes the report of the Panel of Experts on Sierra Leone and expresses its gratitude to the members of the Panel for their detailed analysis of the role of diamond- and arms-smuggling in this brutal war.

The economic sources of conflict must first be exposed if they are to be addressed properly. This report is part of an important trend of examining in depth the economic causes of certain conflicts, including in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, of "naming and shaming" those who profit from and sustain these wars and of taking meaningful action where necessary, including, in the most egregious situations, the imposition of sanctions and embargo measures. Why should this not be done upstream, at the source of the problem, as well as further down the line?

During our time on the Security Council, Canada argued that the Council should consider a range of measures, both coercive and collaborative, to ensure compliance with United Nations resolutions aimed at ending the wars in Sierra Leone and Angola. We believe that this report provides sufficient basis for the adoption of sanctions targeting those identified by the Panel, bearing in mind the need for such sanctions to be both effective and sustainable, while safeguarding civilian populations and the legitimate diamond industry.

In light of the unambiguous conclusions drawn in this report, Canada supports the immediate imposition of an embargo on diamond exports from Liberia, as well as other measures recommended in the report, given that country's clear role as a transit point for gems mined illegally in Sierra Leone. We also support the development, with the Council's support, of stringent control measures in neighbouring countries. Should these collaborative efforts prove inadequate, the Council ought not to hesitate to extend the embargo to other States if and as needed.

We also encourage members to examine carefully the numerous other recommendations in this report with a view to reaching agreement on a comprehensive package of measures that are both effective and pragmatic. We encourage the Security Council to engage relevant bodies in the development of those measures and of criteria for measuring compliance by the States targeted in the report. Any such measure should be tied to explicit criteria, as the Council, we believe, must avoid measures that are ambiguous or open-ended.

(*spoke in English*)

Sanctions are becoming an increasingly effective tool for the maintenance of international peace and security. The various panels of experts established by the Council have helped to bring this situation about. It is essential that this trend continue. The Council's credibility is at issue. More to the point, the Council must have at its disposal viable options between deploying force on the one hand and merely uttering words on the other.

However substantial the contribution made by the ad hoc investigative panels established for Sierra Leone and Angola, we believe that sanctions monitoring would be still more effective if the United Nations were to approach monitoring and enforcement on a less provisional and more systematic basis. Quite simply, targeted sanctions will not work if the Council does not put in place the necessary arrangements to detect violations and to determine the sources and methods of violations. Monitoring arrangements should remain in place for the duration of each targeted sanctions regime, not for finite periods of three, six or nine months' duration.

We urge the Council to consider putting in place a standing, integrated monitoring arrangement, not least to improve efficiency and reduce overlap in the Security Council's efforts to detect violations of Council measures. Instead of having three separate

panels looking at similar issues in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone — and often visiting the same capitals in close succession speak to or about the same individuals — why not have a single monitoring office operating with reference to these and other sanctions regimes, as well to related issues such as illegal trafficking in high-value commodities? Such an office would function on an ongoing basis, submitting reports through the various sanctions Committees at their requests.

We encourage Council members to reflect on how much more effective sanctions would be if such an arrangement were in place and how much greater a deterrent value such sanctions would have. The cost would not be significantly greater than it is at present. The effect would be greater, with the result that the objectives for which the various sanctions regimes were established would stand a far greater chance of being achieved. We are delighted to note that a significant number of members of the Council support this idea.

Finally, we note that there has been an increase in the level of the legitimate, Government-controlled diamond trade in Sierra Leone as a consequence of both the diamond certification scheme supported by the Security Council and of the extensive attention paid to the issue of conflict diamonds recently by industry, Governments and the public. We reiterate our support for international efforts to devise effective and pragmatic measures to eliminate conflict diamonds, with a particular focus on proposals for an international certification scheme for rough diamonds. We call for a concerted approach among diamond-producing and diamond-trading States and believe that today's discussion will underscore the merits of and the need for effective action by both.

The President: In accordance with the decision taken earlier in the meeting, I invite the Permanent Observer of Switzerland to the United Nations to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland rarely addresses the Security Council, but today we believe that a statement is necessary because Switzerland is mentioned in the report of the Panel of Experts established by resolution 1306 (2000) concerning Sierra Leone.

At the outset, I would stress that my Government, too, is concerned by the situation in Sierra Leone and by the resulting instability throughout the region. We support the efforts of the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States to provide a speedy and lasting solution to these problems.

Switzerland particularly welcomes the various measures adopted by the Security Council to put an end to the conflict and to promote peace and stability in the region. We believe that United Nations sanctions aimed, inter alia, at eliminating the economic bases that allow the conflict situation to persist are an important instrument for attaining these goals.

In order to make these sanctions truly effective, we need to be mindful of the risk of their being circumvented. This problem is particularly relevant with regard to the illicit importation of rough diamonds from Sierra Leone. In this respect, I wish to recall that my Government has not only fully implemented all the recommendations of the Security Council, but has gone even further in many spheres. It has, inter alia, taken additional steps to enforce more effectively the sanctions regime in the free ports and has drawn up a list of countries that are potentially vulnerable to the diamond traffic that sustains conflict. These countries require increased vigilance.

The Swiss Government therefore regrets the fact that the report of the Panel of Experts — contrary to the recent, similar report on sanctions against UNITA — refers in a partial and incomplete way to the measures taken by Switzerland in this area, which are detailed in the annex to the letter that I have addressed to the President of the Security Council in document S/2000/1232.

Allow me to add that my country supports international efforts to design a global certification system to prevent trade in conflict diamonds. We welcome the General Assembly's adoption last December of the resolution on the role of diamonds, as well as the efforts that have been made by participants in the "Kimberley Process". That Process has clearly received a mandate from the General Assembly to continue its work in this direction. Switzerland intends to be actively involved in these efforts.

In conclusion, I would stress that my Government attaches great importance to the promotion of peace and stability in Sierra Leone and neighbouring countries. At stake are not only the security of the

people, but sustainable development throughout the entire region.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Guinea. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Camara (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to convey to you, Sir, my delegation's sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. Given our knowledge and appreciation of your outstanding personal and professional qualities, my delegation is confident that under your guidance, the Security Council, in this first month of the new millennium, will be able to write a fresh chapter in its history.

Sir, I wish to welcome your recent initiative to facilitate greater cooperation between countries that contribute troops to peacekeeping operations and the Security Council, so as to enhance the work of the Council. I wish also to express our appreciation to the Council for having enabled our delegation to take part in today's meeting, which is devoted to the consideration of a situation that affects the equilibrium of the whole of the West African region in general, and my country in particular.

Indeed, for more than 10 years now, our subregion has been gripped by a crisis that has seriously jeopardized peace and security in our countries. Everyone is aware of the great sufferings that have afflicted the peoples of Liberia and Sierra Leone for a decade now. My delegation would wish to stress in particular the atrocities committed during that period in the two afflicted countries, the hundreds of thousands of people forced into exile and the considerable material damage that has resulted.

Thanks to their determination, the States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its interposition force, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group, were able to end the genocide in Liberia. The return of peace and the holding of free elections in that country, which allowed those very parties who were responsible for the genocide to come into power, have not diminished their belligerence. They have continued their activities of destabilization and destruction against other neighbouring States, in particular Sierra Leone and Guinea.

The involvement and outright support of the Liberian Government for various rebel movements of the subregion have been proved beyond a doubt. The Monrovia authorities are pursuing a policy of terrorism, thereby violating all of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, ECOWAS and the Mano River Union.

The allegations made by the delegation of Liberia are unfounded and cannot in any way disguise the belligerent nature of the Liberian authorities. Everyone is aware of the support given by Liberia and its President to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels. Liberia and other States of the region are the main suppliers of weapons to the various rebel groups operating in Western Africa, in a flagrant and widespread violation of the arms sanctions imposed by the Security Council.

The excellent report of the Panel of Experts on the links between blood diamonds and weapons in Sierra Leone is very instructive in this regard. We would like to commend the outstanding work done by the Panel under its Chairman, Mr. Chowdhury.

My country, the Republic of Guinea, is subject to rebel attacks led from Monrovia and supported by RUF rebels. These attacks have resulted in a great number of deaths, including that of an official of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; significant material damage; and a genuine humanitarian disaster involving the displacement of border populations and the scattering of hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Despite the recent statement of the President of the Security Council condemning these attacks and pointing the finger explicitly at Liberia, the incursions continue. It is absolutely vital to put an end to the terrorist activities of the Monrovia authorities and to break the link between Sierra Leone diamonds and the supply of weapons to rebel movements. This is the challenge that the Security Council is tackling today.

It is understandable, therefore, why my delegation welcomes this initiative and hails the measures contained in the draft resolution before the Council. We hope that the targeted sanctions that have been envisaged will send a strong signal to the Liberian President to end his support for rebel and terrorist movements.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to encourage the Council to monitor compliance with, and respect for, the provisions contained in the draft resolution, as soon as it is adopted.

The President: I thank the representative of Guinea for the kind words he addressed to me and to my delegation.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Burkina Faso. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the first month of this year. We congratulate you also on the skill and wisdom that you are demonstrating and on the outstanding manner in which you are conducting our deliberations.

I should like also to congratulate the new members of the Council — Colombia, Ireland, Mauritius, Norway and Singapore. We wish them every success in carrying out their new and heavy responsibilities.

The Panel of Experts set up by Security Council resolution 1306 (2000) has submitted its final report, on which the Council will subsequently be delivering its conclusions. As everyone knows, this report concerns us, and I should therefore like, on behalf of my Government, to make a brief statement in this respect.

Since the very beginning, Burkina Faso's position has been well-known, having been set forth in detail — first, during the initial hearings on Sierra Leone diamonds last July at the United Nations; then during the various discussions with members of the Panel during their investigative missions in our country; and again in London last December, where, during the intergovernmental meeting on conflict diamonds, we had an opportunity once again to make our position clear.

Finally, in the broader context of the General Assembly, we recently participated in a debate on the role of conflict diamonds, which resulted in the adoption of resolution 55/56, which we co-sponsored. Accordingly, we deem it, to put it mildly, inappropriate to try to argue the case once again and to put us on the defensive. Wisdom and the determination to try to find a solution to the question incline us merely to take note of the final report of the Panel of Experts.

One of the objectives of the Security Council, when it assigned the investigation mission to the Panel of Experts, was to encourage incriminated countries to attest to their good faith and their total willingness to cooperate with the United Nations. That is how we understood the message, and that is how we translated it in the various steps taken by my Government to show our full willingness and firm resolve to work with the United Nations transparently and honestly.

The first step was to set up an inter-ministerial committee on 22 March 2000 to follow up sanctions against UNITA. Article 1 of the enabling legislation stipulates "the general authority for the follow-up and implementation of Security Council resolutions". The immediate consequence of this regulation was that nationals of Angola and Sierra Leone, with the exception of those on official mission from the legal Governments of these countries, would be prohibited from entering, transiting or residing in Burkina Faso.

Subsequently, the Government prohibited, according to a decree issued on 27 October 2000, any transactions involving precious stones and metals coming from conflict areas throughout the whole of the national territory of Burkina Faso. Shortly after, we welcomed three successive investigative missions to Ouagadougou from the United Nations, the first two concerning Angola and the latter Sierra Leone, to which our Government gave total freedom and full facilities for conducting their work. They were allowed to visit and even to photograph military warehouses. They were allowed to question whomever they wanted, and, of course, they were allowed to have working meetings with the inter-ministerial committee. In a word, Burkina Faso, a nation which respects freedom and is now open to democratic values and requirements, gave every leeway to your *missi dominici* freely to accomplish their duty.

But the most important and decisive step by far was the one that followed from the decision taken by Burkina Faso to establish a mechanism to monitor the importing and utilization of weapons, a mechanism which will be established for a period of three years under United Nations supervision. Furthermore, I can announce to this Council that the decree that established this mechanism and which defined its juridical nature and regime, as well as the modalities for its functioning, has just been adopted by the governmental council at its meeting of 24 January 2001. A letter addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations proposes that both sides, Burkina Faso and the United Nations, get together to determine

the political and technical structure under which this mechanism could be formalized.

Under the terms of the decree, the mechanism is governed by a high authority consisting of members of the Government and the Parliament — that is, the National Assembly and the Chamber of Representatives — which is authorized, under United Nations supervision, to

> "monitor any import of weapons by the Government of Burkina Faso, in strict conformity with the relevant provisions of the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons, also in strict conformity with the rules governing public contracts, as well as procedures for the issuance of final destination certificates and the drafting of the import manifest. The High Authority is also authorized to prevent any illicit trafficking in weapons in the territory of Burkina Faso".

It is understood, furthermore, that the United Nations would be informed of how weapons acquired by Burkina Faso would be used under our national budget and that any movement of weapons would be the subject of prior communication to the United Nations Secretariat.

So, in brief, this is the substance of this measure that we hope will remove, once and for all, any ambiguity and will allay any suspicion about us. Very few States would be prepared to subject themselves to this action, which is tantamount to infringement of sovereignty. Burkina Faso did so to prove its staunch resolve to contribute to the implementation of Security Council resolutions and any other measures that seek to guarantee peace and security in Africa and in the world.

It is precisely in the light of all of these efforts by my country that it is really difficult for us to understand the recommendations contained in paragraph 35 of the report. According to these recommendations, the Panel of Experts recommends new investigations into the import of weapons by Burkina Faso over the last five years — that is to say, well before the Council's seizure of the question of Sierra Leone, because the first resolution on Sierra Leone dates back to 1997. Frankly, we do not understand the reasons behind this recommendation, which does not offer any encouragement to the steps taken by my country, but what is more, it does not contribute at all to trying to find a solution to the Sierra Leonean crisis. To put it mildly, my Government thinks that the best reward for our total commitment to cooperate with the United Nations would be to close the past chapter in order to give the present and the future a chance.

In conclusion, Mr. President, and without prejudice to decisions that your Council will be taking in due course following its deliberations on the report of the Panel of Experts, we wish to convey thanks to those who have understood us and even supported us and to those who have not spared us when it came to criticizing us. You are all entitled to our respect, because all of you, in your own way and according to your view of the objective facts and of fairness, have done your duty.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): At the outset, let me congratulate you on your becoming President of the Security Council. We are delighted to see you in the chair. With your legendary dynamism and vast experience, we are confident that your presidency will be eventful and successful. We wish you the very best. Similarly, my delegation would like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Lavrov, for a job well done.

Having said that, we also thank you for organizing this open meeting devoted to the report of the Panel of Experts on Sierra Leone, diamonds and arms. We welcome the idea of bringing this thorny issue out in the open. It affords us the opportunity of not only clearing our name but also stopping the bad blood in our West African subregion that the Sierra Leonean blood diamonds have recently created, further exacerbated by the broad and thorough report of the Panel of Experts.

We in the Gambia were flabbergasted by its baseless and malicious allegations. As a peace-loving nation that has always enjoyed excellent relations with Sierra Leone, a sister country, it has made our blood boil and has left us wondering whether, for some obscure reason or reasons unknown to us, the Panel is out for our country's blood. Despite all the odds, our blood is not up. All we want to do is to set the record straight.

First and foremost, we would have thought that the Panel of Experts, out of courtesy, should have visited the Gambia and discussed any issue of concern

with the competent Gambian authorities, as the Experts have done with other countries mentioned in their report. Why have they not done so? Is there a hidden agenda to mount a smear campaign against the Gambia? What is the motive behind these baseless allegations? The representative of Ukraine is perfectly right in stating that all relevant evidence should be brought to the attention of the Governments concerned. That was not the case with my Government. Yet we all want a healthy and fruitful working relationship with the Panel.

Let me hasten to point out that we have never denied that some individuals have been involved in this trade since time immemorial — long before the Gambia gained independence from Britain in 1965. This is common knowledge. My Sierra Leonean colleague and friends and I have laughed over it many times. He is here to bear me witness. But there should be a distinction between the actions of individuals and those of a Government. Individuals should be accountable for their actions. A Government should not be taken to task for, or have to account for, the actions of an individual or group of individuals, especially in a case like this.

This is why we are insisting on our invitation to the Panel of Experts to visit the Gambia and present to the authorities in Banjul the evidence they have — if any — linking the Government to this illegal trade. That is all that we require from this body: treat the Gambia fairly. We are therefore requesting the Security Council, in all fairness, guided by the principle of equal treatment of all States, to send the Panel of Experts to the Gambia and show us any proof that our Government exports diamonds.

It is sad to say, but this is ridiculous, to say the least, for a country that has no mineral resources. It is simply ludicrous! The Government of the Gambia will defend its integrity at all costs, but we want to give the Council the chance to send the Panel of Experts to Banjul first, before we take any appropriate action to restore our country's good name.

Thank God, in the case of the Gambia, there is no evidence whatsoever establishing any links between the sale of diamonds and gun-running activities in Sierra Leone. Besides, the Gambia has no borders with Sierra Leone.

Through the unscrupulous behaviour of some individuals, it is possible that diamonds might be passing through the Gambia to other destinations, but it is preposterous to even insinuate that the Government either condones or participates in such transactions, or derives any revenue from this illegal trade, either through taxes or otherwise.

Considering the Gambia's stance regarding maintaining peace and stability within our subregion in particular and in Africa generally, the country cannot be involved in any activity that could have negative effects in Sierra Leone or contribute to the procurement of arms and the encouragement of war. The Gambia, despite its meagre resources, will continue to do all it can to contribute to the search for an honourable solution to the Sierra Leonean crisis. The bonds uniting Sierra Leone and the Gambia — and they are many and date back many centuries — are too strong for such baseless allegations to undo. The number of Sierra Leonean refugees in the Gambia is a testimony to our long-standing ties of friendship and cooperation with that country.

In conclusion, the Government of the Gambia is again calling on the Panel to withdraw its statement on the Gambia and indicate as soon as possible the dates on which a delegation of the Panel of Experts could visit Banjul, so that we could together inform the whole world that the Government of the Gambia is too much aware of its international obligations to be involved in such a shameful trade. These allegations are unfounded, and therefore we want our country's name removed from the list of countries dealing in 'blood diamonds.

There is still time to set the record straight. This is why we support the extension of the mandate of the Panel, as proposed by the United Kingdom. In this way, the Panel will be able to carry on with its unfinished business, including an early visit to the Gambia — preferably before the scheduled meeting early next month between the Security Council and a ministerial delegation from the Economic Community of West African States — so as to clear the air as far as my Government is concerned.

To echo the words of the President, we should act swiftly on the Panel's report, but justly. All that we ask is that the Gambia be treated fairly, by separating the chaff from the grain. That is all we want, nothing more, nothing less.

The President: I thank the representative of the Gambia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Côte d'Ivoire. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Bouah-Kamon (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving Côte d'Ivoire the opportunity to take part in this important meeting of the Security Council, which is once again addressing the situation in Sierra Leone in the light of the report of the Panel of Experts created pursuant to resolution 1306 (2000). This report is presented by Ambassador Chowdhury in document S/2000/1195, dated 20 December 2000. I commend the Ambassador for the quality of the work that has been done.

Before continuing my remarks on this subject, allow me to convey to you, Mr. President, my delegation's warmest greetings and congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January — this being the first presidency of the year 2001 and of the new millennium. If it they are not too late, please accept as well my best wishes for the new year. The decisive role that your dynamic country, the Republic of Singapore, plays to promote development and peace around the world leads me to believe most assuredly that you will carry out your task with success, to the benefit of our Organization and of all its Members.

The report that is the subject of our meeting today provides the Council information about possible violations of measures taken by the Council to end the existing links between the diamond trade and the supply and circulation of arms and related *matériel*, by various ways and means, in the West African subregion and elsewhere.

In this regional context, my country is named at various points in the report as being among those having special relationships with the countries or the parties in conflict in Sierra Leone. More to the point, my country is named as a venue for commercial transactions in diamonds and for aerial navigation, to the benefit of the actors in the war in Sierra Leone.

Before attempting to respond to the parts of the report that implicitly suggest that Côte d'Ivoire plays an important role in the various types of trade fuelling the war efforts of the conflicting parties in Sierra Leone, I would like to tell the Council that my country approves of its initiative to entrust a panel of experts with the mission of shedding light on the issue of involvement by States of the subregion.

I would also like to highlight one fact, namely, that Côte d'Ivoire was unable to provide the Panel of Experts with statistics about Côte d'Ivoire's import and export of diamonds in good time, that is, before the preparation of the Panel's report. It has since done so, in a letter dated 4 January 2001 addressed to the secretariat of the Security Council Committee on Sierra Leone established by resolution 1132 (1997). That delay was justified by the unstable political situation that has prevailed in Côte d'Ivoire since 24 December 1999. Since that time, there have been four Governments. The delay in providing information has been due to administrative changes, and not because of any indifference or lack of consideration by my country for the United Nations. I would once again like to reaffirm to the Council the commitment of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to resolutely undertake measures to ensure compliance with Security Council sanctions within the context of its overall policies.

The second part of the report deals with weapons. Its chapter III, which is entitled "The role of other countries", deals in particular with the weapons of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Paragraph 194 states that private brokers and arms merchants are the main suppliers of the RUF and that most large arms and ammunition supplies reach the RUF only indirectly and through countries with Governments sympathetic to it. Paragraph 195 names Côte d'Ivoire and says that

> "Côte d'Ivoire, under previous administrations, was sympathetic to the Liberian government and, indirectly, to the RUF in Sierra Leone. The Ivorian relationship dates back to the training of RUF and Liberian rebels in Côte d'Ivoire in the early 1990s."

In that connection, I wish to make the point that the word "training" is imprecise, as training involves various aspects. What aspect are we talking about here? Let us avoid any blurring of distinctions.

Having said that, I would like to point out that Côte d'Ivoire has constantly striven to maintain excellent relations with all its immediate neighbours. With regard to Liberia in particular, it should be noted that Liberia is like other countries bordering on Côte d'Ivoire in that they are made up of the same peoples, who were artificially separated by the borders inherited from colonialization. It must be kept in mind that the Krahns and the Gios of Liberia are the Gueres and Yacuba of Côte d'Ivoire. Moreover, it is precisely

because of this ethnic affinity that there has been a harmonious integration of Liberian refugees into Côte d'Ivoire.

It should also be noted that late President Houphouët-Boigny — the country's first President — and the Government and people of Côte d'Ivoire have spared no sacrifice to help to restore peace to Liberia. The thousands of Liberian refugees fraternally welcomed by the people of Côte d'Ivoire at the height of the civil war in Liberia attest to that fact.

In addition, the role played by Côte d'Ivoire to try to restore peace to Liberia and Sierra Leone should also be recalled. Sierra Leone's recent history includes the Abidjan agreements signed by the Freetown Government and the RUF, which at the time was headed by Mr. Foday Sankoh. I would also like to remind the Council that it was due to the efforts of diplomats from Côte d'Ivoire that Mr. Sankoh was induced to quit his retreat in the forests of Sierra Leone to come to the negotiating table. It does not seem fair to us that the relations we had, and which we continue to have, with the two fraternal countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone — and even with the RUF — should be interpreted as a sign of being sympathetic to the appalling activities being condemned by the international community. It would have been desirable for the report to be precise at this point, especially as the events mentioned go back to the early 1990s.

Similar precision should have been applied to paragraph 209, which refers to the flight of an Ukrainian BAC-111 aircraft that allegedly flew to Abidjan without declaring the date and time of its arrival, information necessary for a national investigation.

With regard to paragraph 216, which refers to the private activities of an Israeli businessman resident in Abidjan who is allegedly very close to President Charles Taylor, I believe the Council will agree with me that the activities and movements of that individual cannot be imputed to the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, in particular as that person holds a Liberian diplomatic passport.

With regard to the report's technical points relating to air traffic monitoring systems in West Africa and to a certification regime for diamonds originating in Sierra Leone, my country would be happy to support any initiative to make United Nations sanctions more effective that would not jeopardize its national interests or, above all, involve additional expenses to the countries of the subregion.

Similarly, Côte d'Ivoire is prepared to sign — if it has not already done so — the 1989 International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries. I take this opportunity to assure countries neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, and the international community at large, that the Government of my country has never permitted, and will never permit, anyone to use its territory to undermine the territorial or political integrity of any country in Africa or anywhere else in the world.

Animated by that commitment, the Côte d'Ivoire of the Second Republic, under the leadership of President Laurent Gbagbo, reaffirms its full readiness to continue to work in close cooperation with the United Nations, the Security Council and the sanctions Committees.

The new authorities of my country, who came to power only three months ago, call on the international community to give them the time to settle in and to become acquainted with these issues, and to extend understanding to them so that they may restore to full vigour the position and image of Côte d'Ivoire on the international scene, in accordance with the principles and ideals of the United Nations.

The President: I thank the representative of Côte d'Ivoire for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Belgium. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Adam (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium fully supports the statement made on behalf of the European Union by the Permanent Representative of Sweden as President of the European Union.

As the Ambassador of Sweden did, I too would like to congratulate Ambassador Chowdhury and the Panel of Experts for the excellent job done.

My country would like to take this opportunity to reiterate its resolve to find a solution to the problem of conflict diamonds, as well as to say that we fully agree with the Panel's conclusions. I would like to make three particular points.

With regard to the need to establish a global certification scheme for rough diamonds based on the system adopted in Sierra Leone, I should like to recall

the prominent role played by Belgium, together with other countries involved in the diamond trade, in the Kimberly process. One of the goals of this process is precisely to establish such a system.

Belgium has great experience in the area of diamonds, and this enabled us to make a decisive contribution to the establishment of the certification system adopted by Sierra Leone. We are prepared to share this experience with the international community so that the system can be expanded.

Paragraph 162 of the report (S/2000/1195, enclosure) states that "It is essential, and a matter of urgency" to set up a harmonized system of public documentation and statistics on diamond imports and exports. We support this concept, as well as the idea of transparency in that area. We are convinced that, whatever kind of global certification scheme is established, one of the key elements for its success will be transparency. My country publishes, on a monthly and annual basis, detailed and complete statistics on all imports and exports of diamonds.

In conclusion, in paragraph 165, the report proposes the creation of an "ongoing focal point ... to monitor adherence to sanctions". Belgium supports this idea, because we are aware of the risk of overlap and duplication caused by the simultaneous existence of three panels of experts.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Niger. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Moutari (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I should like first of all to express the gratitude of the Niger for being able to speak on this agenda item concerning the report of the Panel of Experts on the traffic in diamonds and the conflict situation prevailing in Sierra Leone, which was introduced this morning by Ambassador Chowdhury of Bangladesh.

For us, the fact that this Council — which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security — is being presided over by Mr. Kishore Mahbubani of Singapore is a guarantee of a dispassionate and fair debate whose outcome will be beneficial to Sierra Leone, Africa and the world.

With the aim of bringing peace to our West African subregion, and peace, stability and well-being to our continent as a whole, as our people so profoundly desire, my country has been working closely with the other members of the Economic Community of West African States for such a long time.

That is why, when my delegation was presented with the information in the report, my Government began to carry out the necessary preliminary investigations and communicated to the Secretariat the following information.

The BAC-111 aircraft, with the registration VP-CLM, belonging to the company Aeroleasing Inc., did, indeed, land in Niamey on 22 December 1998 at 21.11 local time, having come from Monrovia, and departed on 23 December 1998 at 19.02 local time. However, at present it is not possible to say what kind of goods that aircraft may have been carrying because the records are kept for only three months. Nevertheless, the competent authorities of the Niger have ordered an investigation to be carried out in order to obtain the information that has been requested.

The Niger will, of course, provide its full and wholehearted cooperation for any initiative that this Council undertakes to bring peace and security to Sierra Leone and the subregion.

I should like to convey our great admiration to you, Sir, and wish you every success as you carry out your functions as President of the Council. I should also like to express to your predecessor, Ambassador Lavrov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation — that great country of which we still have vivid memories of a pleasant visit — our deep appreciation for the outstanding way in which he presided over the Council last month.

The President: I thank the representative of the Niger for his kind words addressed to me.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.